

# Annual Report

Protecting nature. Empowering communities.

2025

# About this report

This annual report presents EcoAlbania’s work, results and learnings throughout 2025, a year of growth, advocacy, and stronger collective action for the protection of Albania’s rivers, biodiversity, and natural ecosystems.

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Tirana, Albania · [www.ecoalbania.org](http://www.ecoalbania.org) · [contact@ecoalbania.org](mailto:contact@ecoalbania.org)

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**FOREWORD**

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# 01

## Foreword

Achievements of the past year and the work ahead.

**Olsi Nika – Executive Director**

# A year of shared action

Dear friends, partners, supporters, and members of the EcoAlbania community,

As we reflect on 2025, I feel immense gratitude and pride for everything we have achieved together throughout this remarkable year. It has been a year of growth, resilience, and stronger collective action for the protection of Albania’s rivers, biodiversity, and natural heritage. More importantly, it has been a year that reaffirmed a simple but powerful truth: meaningful environmental change is only possible when communities, institutions, scientists, activists, and supporters come together around a shared vision.

Throughout the year, EcoAlbania continued its mission to strengthen the relationship between people and nature in Albania. Our efforts remained focused on protecting free-flowing rivers, advancing ecological connectivity, supporting sustainable environmental governance, and empowering local communities to become active voices in conservation processes. From scientific research and policy advocacy to environmental education and public awareness, every initiative reflected our belief that protecting nature is inseparable from protecting the future and well-being of our communities.

One of the defining moments of 2025 was the international recognition of Albania’s environmental movement through the Goldman Environmental Prize. This recognition was not only an honor for EcoAlbania, but a tribute to all the individuals and communities who have dedicated years of effort to defending the Vjosa and other threatened ecosystems. It demonstrated that local action can inspire global change and that Albania can serve as an important example of successful grassroots conservation.

At the same time, this year reminded us that environmental protection remains a continuous challenge. Pressures from unsustainable development, resource exploitation, and climate-related impacts continue to threaten ecosystems across the country. These realities require persistence, cooperation, and long-term commitment. They also reinforce the importance of science-based decision-making, institutional accountability, and active public participation in shaping a more sustainable future.

What gives me hope is the growing awareness and engagement we continue to witness, especially among young people and local communities. Across Albania, more people are recognizing the value of healthy rivers, forests, and protected areas, not only as natural treasures, but as foundations for identity, livelihoods, and resilience. This growing sense of stewardship is one of the strongest achievements of our work and one of the most important investments for the future.

None of the progress presented in this report would have been possible without the trust and support of our partners, donors, collaborators, and friends. I would like to sincerely thank all the organizations and institutions that stood beside us throughout the year and shared our vision for a greener and more sustainable Albania. Your support strengthens not only our projects, but also the broader environmental movement in the region.

I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to the EcoAlbania team. Their dedication, professionalism, and passion continue to drive our mission forward every single day. Behind every achievement are committed individuals who work tirelessly, often under challenging conditions, because they genuinely believe in the importance of protecting nature for future generations.

As we move into 2026, EcoAlbania remains committed to strengthening conservation efforts, expanding collaboration, and amplifying the voices of communities and nature alike. We know that the road ahead will require courage, innovation, and unity, but we also know that lasting change is possible when people come together with determination and hope.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

## Olsi Nika

Executive Director, EcoAlbania

*“Together, we continue to protect not only rivers and landscapes, but the spirit of a future where nature and people thrive side by side.”*

# 02

## About EcoAlbania

Center for Protection of Natural Ecosystems  
in Albania. Who we are, why we do this.

**ABOUT**

# Mission, vision & approach

The Center for Protection of Natural Ecosystems in Albania (EcoAlbania) is a non-governmental environmental organization, committed to safeguarding the country's biodiversity, and natural heritage. Established in 2014 with a strong belief in the intrinsic value of nature, EcoAlbania works to preserve ecological integrity while promoting sustainable pathways for socio-economic development.

At the heart of EcoAlbania's mission lies the protection of natural ecosystems and the complex interactions that sustain them. By focusing on the conservation of wildlife and their habitats, the organization advocates for the responsible and sustainable use of natural resources, ensuring that environmental stewardship goes hand in hand with human well-being. EcoAlbania recognizes that long-term prosperity depends on maintaining the balance between nature and society.

EcoAlbania's approach is multidisciplinary and collaborative. Its work integrates scientific research, policy advocacy, community engagement, and strategic communication to advance sustainable development models. Through evidence-based initiatives and partnerships with local communities, institutions, and international stakeholders, the organization strives to influence decision-making processes and inspire collective action for environmental protection and nature conservation.

## Mission

EcoAlbania works to strengthen the harmonious coexistence between people and nature in Albania.

## Vision

A future where Albania's biodiversity, natural landscapes, and communities flourish together in balance and resilience.

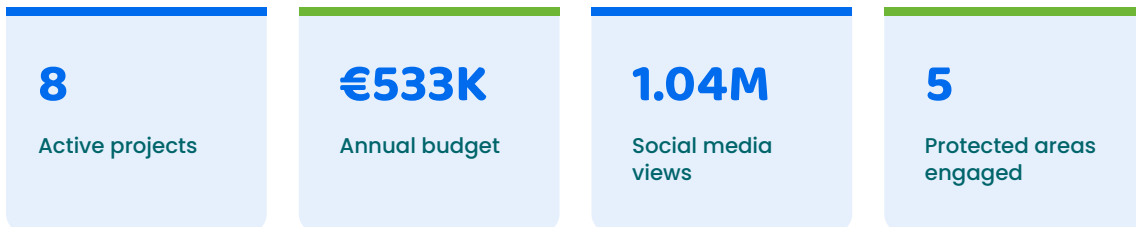
# 03

## The 2025 in a nutshell

Key moments, milestones, and reach in numbers.

OVERVIEW

# Highlights of the year



The year 2025 marked a period of consolidation, growth, and increasing impact for EcoAlbania, as the organization continued to advance its mission of protecting the country’s unique natural heritage. A central focus remained the ongoing protection and promotion of the Vjosa Wild River National Park, reinforcing its status as one of Europe’s last free-flowing river ecosystems and a symbol of successful environmental advocacy.

Building on this momentum, EcoAlbania expanded its efforts to enhance ecological corridors and river connectivity, recognizing the importance of interconnected habitats for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. This strategic direction reflects a broader commitment to landscape-scale conservation approaches that ensure the long-term health of Albania’s natural systems.

Community engagement remained at the core of EcoAlbania’s work, with a particular emphasis on strengthening relationships with local communities and empowering youth along the Vjosa basin. Through education, outreach, and participatory initiatives, the organization fostered a growing sense of stewardship and local ownership over environmental protection efforts.

In 2025, Albanian environmental activism received significant international recognition, highlighted by the awarding of the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize, known widely also as the “Green Noble Prize” to EcoAlbania. This global acknowledgment underscored the organization’s impactful work and positioned Albania as a leading example of successful grassroots conservation efforts, inspiring similar initiatives worldwide.

At the same time, the organization significantly increased its communication reach through targeted campaigns, publications, and public events. By amplifying its message and engaging broader audiences, EcoAlbania strengthened public awareness and support for the protection of Albania’s rivers and ecosystems.

Together, these achievements underscore a year of meaningful progress, reinforcing EcoAlbania’s role as a driving force for environmental protection and sustainable development in Albania.

# 04

## Our Work

Eight projects, one mission, protecting rivers, restoring ecosystems, empowering communities.

PORTFOLIO

# Our work in 2025

## Overview

In 2025, EcoAlbania implemented a diverse portfolio of projects that collectively advanced the protection of Albania’s rivers, biodiversity, and natural ecosystems. These initiatives were strategically designed to address both immediate conservation needs and long-term environmental challenges, reflecting the organization’s integrated and forward-looking approach.

Across all projects, a strong emphasis was placed on safeguarding the ecological integrity of the Vjosa River and its tributaries, while also expanding efforts to enhance habitat connectivity and ecosystem resilience nationwide. By combining field-based research, policy engagement, and on-the-ground conservation actions, EcoAlbania ensured that its interventions were both scientifically grounded and impactful.

Equally important was the organization’s commitment to community involvement. Many projects actively engaged local stakeholders, fostering collaboration, raising environmental awareness, and empowering communities, particularly young people, to play an active role in protecting their natural surroundings. This participatory approach strengthened local ownership and contributed to the sustainability of project outcomes.

In parallel, EcoAlbania’s projects amplified advocacy and communication efforts, translating scientific knowledge into accessible information and mobilizing public and institutional support. Through partnerships at national and international levels, the organization further enhanced the reach and effectiveness of its initiatives.

Together, the projects implemented in 2025 demonstrate EcoAlbania’s holistic vision where conservation, community engagement, and policy influence work hand in hand to secure a resilient and thriving natural environment for Albania.

- 1** Europe’s 1st Wild River National Park - Vjosa-Aoós
- 2** Improve Sustainability of CCAs in Albania (ISCCA)
- 3** Protected Areas Matter - PAMANCA
- 4** ESPID4Vjosa - Science-Policy Interface
- 5** “Melodies of Nature” Festival
- 6** SD-WISHEES - Hydroclimatic Resilience
- 7** RESCOM - Nature-Based Solutions on the Buna

**PROJECT**

# Europe's 1st Wild River National Park - Vjosa-Aoós

**OVERALL GOAL**

Ensure effective management of the Vjosa Wild River National Park, including expansion of its boundaries to cover key tributaries and the river delta, while promoting it as a regional model for wild-river conservation.

**DONOR**

Holdfast Foundation, Techow Foundation, Aage V. Jensen Foundation

**IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS**

EcoAlbania, EuroNatur, Riverwatch

**PROJECT AREA**

Vjosa River valley

## Project Key Actions

This project builds directly on the legacy of the *Save the Blue Heart of Europe* campaign, which laid the foundation for large-scale river protection across the Balkans. While the campaign successfully raised awareness and mobilized international support to halt destructive hydropower development, the current project represents the next phase, shifting from advocacy to long-term management, protection, and restoration. In this sense, it translates the vision of the campaign into sustained, on-the-ground action, ensuring that the achievements secured are preserved and strengthened over time.

As part of a long-term, 10-year commitment, this project continued to focus on safeguarding the ecological integrity of the Vjosa Wild River National Park, Europe's first of its kind. In 2025, EcoAlbania advanced this objective through a combination of monitoring, policy engagement, scientific collaboration, and public outreach, ensuring that the park's protection status is not only maintained but effectively implemented in practice.

*During 2025, several key actions were undertaken:*

## Protection of the Shushica River

In 2025, EcoAlbania significantly intensified its efforts to protect the Shushica River, one of the most important tributaries of the Vjosa. Facing the threat of water diversion for the Himara water supply system, the organization adopted a comprehensive, multi-layered response. This included strong community mobilization, with local residents actively participating in protests and awareness activities to defend their river and livelihoods.

A particularly powerful symbol of resistance was the establishment of a riverside [protest camp](#), which served both as a physical presence against ongoing works and as a focal point for national and international solidarity. In parallel, EcoAlbania pursued legal avenues, challenging the project on environmental and procedural grounds, while continuously engaging with institutions to highlight the ecological and social risks involved.

These combined efforts not only delayed harmful interventions but also elevated the Shushica case into a broader national debate on water management, conservation priorities, and community rights. The work carried out in 2025 reaffirmed the importance of protecting tributaries as integral components of the Vjosa ecosystem.



## Scientific Engagement for River Protection



Scientific research remained a cornerstone of EcoAlbania’s conservation strategy. The annual [Science Week](#), held from 28 April to 3 May, brought together a dynamic network of professors, students, and researchers from Albania and international institutions, including the University of Vienna. This initiative provided a platform for knowledge exchange, joint fieldwork, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Participants engaged in hands-on research activities along the Vjosa and its tributaries, contributing valuable data on biodiversity, hydrology, and ecosystem health. The presence of international experts not only strengthened scientific rigor but also fostered long-term partnerships between Albanian academia and global research institutions.

Beyond data collection, Science Week played a crucial role in inspiring the next generation of environmental professionals in Albania. By involving students directly in field research and conservation discussions, EcoAlbania helped bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical application, ensuring that future efforts are grounded in strong scientific foundations.

## Capacity Building on Environmental Litigation

Recognizing the critical role of the legal system in environmental protection, EcoAlbania organized a specialized three-day training on environmental litigation for key judicial actors, including magistrates, prosecutors, and judges. This initiative aimed to strengthen institutional capacity to effectively handle environmental cases, which are often complex and require both legal and technical understanding.

The training was designed to be highly interactive, combining theoretical frameworks with practical case studies drawn from real-life environmental disputes. Participants engaged in discussions, simulations, and peer learning exercises, allowing them to exchange experiences and deepen their understanding of procedural and substantive environmental law.

By investing in the knowledge and skills of legal professionals, EcoAlbania contributed to creating a more capable and responsive judicial system. This is a crucial step toward ensuring that environmental laws are not only in place but are also properly enforced, providing long-term protection for Albania’s natural resources.

## Forest Restoration Efforts in the Vjosa Valley

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## Mapping Human Pressures and Awareness Raising

A major milestone in 2025 was the completion of a comprehensive assessment mapping the primary human pressures affecting the Vjosa Wild River National Park. This analysis identified key threats, including extractive industries, water abstraction, waste pollution, irrigation practices, and unregulated tourism.

The findings were translated into a visually compelling “pressures map,” which became the foundation for the “Vjosa Threats” awareness campaign. Through strategic communication, including social media outreach and visual storytelling, EcoAlbania effectively conveyed complex environmental challenges to a broad audience, making them accessible and engaging.

In addition, two national and international press trips were organized, bringing journalists directly to affected areas. These visits resulted in extensive media coverage, including video reports and in-depth articles highlighting ongoing environmental concerns such as oil pollution and gravel extraction.

By combining scientific evidence with strong communication tools, EcoAlbania successfully raised public awareness and increased pressure on institutions to address these issues. This integrated approach ensured that environmental challenges are not only documented but also actively addressed through informed public discourse.

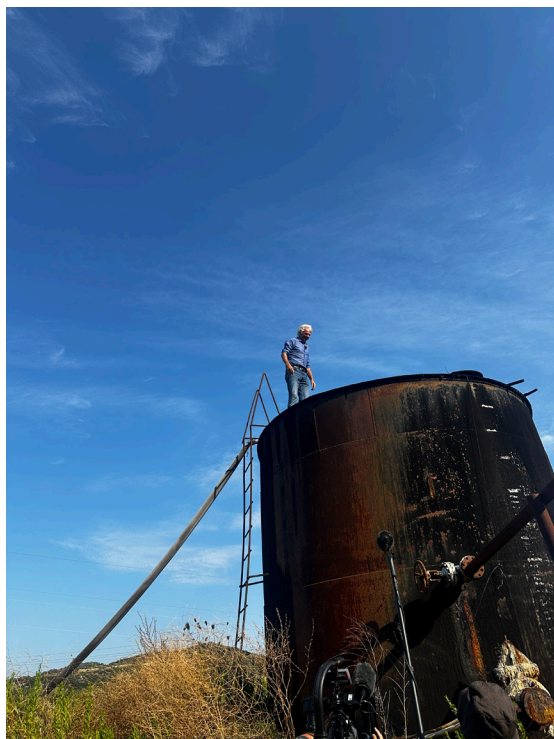
## Media and Advocacy

Media outreach and advocacy remained a critical pillar of EcoAlbania’s work in 2025, serving as a bridge between scientific evidence, community voices, and decision-making processes. To bring greater visibility to ongoing environmental threats, EcoAlbania organized both national and international press trips, inviting journalists to experience firsthand the challenges facing the Vjosa and its tributaries.

These field visits provided direct exposure to issues such as oil pollution, gravel extraction, water abstraction, and waste mismanagement—allowing media representatives to report from the ground with accuracy and depth. By facilitating access to affected sites and connecting journalists with local communities, experts, and activists, EcoAlbania ensured that the stories captured reflected both the ecological significance of the river system and the real-life impacts on people.

The resulting media coverage was extensive and impactful, including television reports, online features, and print articles across a range of national and international outlets. This visibility not only amplified public awareness but also increased pressure on institutions to address identified threats and uphold environmental standards.

In a broader context, these advocacy efforts contribute to shaping public discourse around river protection in Albania and the region. By strategically using media as a tool for accountability and engagement, EcoAlbania continues to strengthen transparency, encourage informed debate, and mobilize support for the long-term preservation of the Vjosa Wild River National Park and its interconnected ecosystems.



**PROJECT**

# Improve Sustainability of South-Eastern CCAs in Albania- ISCCA

**OVERALL GOAL**

The general objective of this proposal is to maintain and improve ecological connectivity of Polis-Valamare-Rungaje-Morave-Gramoz CCA through a sustainable and participatory governance approach.

**DONOR**

Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust (PONT)

**IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS**

EcoAlbania

**PROJECT AREA**

Eastern Ecological Corridor in Albania  
(The Polis- Valamare- Rungajë- Moravë- Gramoz)

## Project Key Actions

In 2025, the ISCCA project advanced the development and integration of ecological corridors as a key approach to biodiversity conservation and sustainable land use. Through strengthened institutional cooperation, stakeholder engagement, education, and field-based mapping, the project contributed to embedding ecological connectivity into local planning and decision-making processes. By combining technical tools with participatory approaches, ISCCA is laying the groundwork for long-term, inclusive, and science-based environmental management.

## Steering Committee Meetings

The second Steering Committee meeting marked an important milestone in consolidating cooperation among local and regional institutions, as well as academic partners involved in the ISCCA project. The meeting served as a platform to align priorities, review progress, and strengthen coordination among stakeholders responsible for implementing project activities.



During the session, EcoAlbania presented the finalized Action Plan, a strategic document outlining concrete steps for advancing ecological corridor development and ensuring effective project implementation. Particular attention was given to improving the Memorandum of Understanding, with the aim of reinforcing institutional collaboration and clarifying roles and responsibilities among partners.



Beyond planning, the meeting also focused on broader strategic objectives, including raising awareness of ecological corridors, promoting sustainable resource use, and integrating nature-based solutions into local governance frameworks. These discussions are essential for ensuring that ecological connectivity is not treated as a standalone concept, but rather embedded into long-term territorial planning and development policies.

## Public Participation Guidelines for Local Stakeholders

A key achievement in 2025 was the development of a draft Public Participation Guideline, designed to enhance the involvement of local stakeholders in environmental decision-making processes. Recognizing that effective conservation depends on inclusive governance, this guideline aims to create structured and transparent channels for dialogue between institutions, civil society, and communities.

The document provides practical tools and recommendations to facilitate meaningful engagement, including methods for consultation, information-sharing, and conflict resolution. It emphasizes the importance of inclusiveness, ensuring that diverse voices, particularly those directly affected by environmental decisions are heard and considered.

Although finalized in draft form during 2025, the guideline is intended to be a living document. In the coming year, it will be shared with local communities and stakeholders for consultation, ensuring that it reflects local realities and needs before its official adoption. This participatory approach strengthens both the legitimacy and effectiveness of environmental governance processes within the ISCCA framework.

## Environmental Education in Schools



Environmental education remained a central component of the ISCCA project, with targeted activities carried out in schools to engage younger generations. These sessions introduced students to the concept of ecological corridors and their critical role in maintaining biodiversity and enabling wildlife movement across fragmented landscapes.

Using interactive methods such as discussions, presentations, and hands-on exercises, students explored how human activities impact ecosystems and why connectivity between habitats is essential for species survival. The sessions were designed not only to inform but also to inspire, encouraging students to reflect on their relationship with nature and their role in protecting it.



By fostering environmental awareness at an early age, the project contributes to building a culture of sustainability within local communities. These educational efforts are particularly important in areas directly connected to the ecological corridor, where future stewardship will depend on informed and engaged citizens.



## Mapping and Promotion of the Ecological Corridor

Significant progress was made in mapping and promoting the ecological corridor, a core component of the ISCCA project. Field activities focused on identifying key areas that support biodiversity connectivity, providing a scientific and spatial foundation for conservation planning.

During 2025, three local guides were engaged to map trail routes in Gramsh, Pogradec, and Shebenik, which are areas of high ecological importance. This work not only contributed to the technical mapping of the corridor but also integrated local knowledge into the process, ensuring that the results are both accurate and contextually relevant.

The mapping outputs serve as a valuable tool for visualizing the ecological corridor and informing decision-makers about priority areas for conservation and sustainable use. At the same time, promotion activities were carried out to raise awareness among institutions and the public, highlighting the corridor's ecological significance and its role in maintaining healthy, resilient ecosystems.

By combining technical mapping with communication efforts, the project strengthens both the scientific basis and public understanding of ecological connectivity, paving the way for its integration into policy and practice.



**PROJECT**

# Protected Areas Matter - Advocating for Nature Conservation in Albania

**OVERALL GOAL**

The project aims to improve decision-making processes, strengthen the monitoring of conservation efforts, and enhance cooperation among stakeholders

**DONOR**

Eu Delegation

**IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS**

EcoAlbania, ResPublica, Free Media Forum

**PROJECT AREA**

Protected Areas Network in Albania with focus on 5 key protected areas: Butrint National Park, Pisha Poro – Narta Protected Landscape, Lura – Deja National Park, Buna Nature Managed Reserve, Shebenik-Jabllanica National Park

## Project Key Actions

In 2025, the PAMANCA (Protected Areas Matter – Advocating for Nature Conservation in Albania) project played a key role in strengthening the governance and protection of Albania’s protected areas. By promoting public participation, increasing awareness of environmental legislation, and empowering civil society and local communities, the project contributed to more transparent, inclusive, and effective environmental decision-making. Through a combination of dialogue, capacity-building, and community-based action, PAMANCA supported a shift toward more participatory and accountable management of natural resources.

## Regional Workshops and Community Engagement



A central pillar of the PAMANCA project in 2025 was the organization of regional workshops and community meetings across five selected protected areas. These gatherings created important platforms for dialogue, bringing together local communities, civil society organizations, and institutional representatives.

The discussions focused on key challenges in protected area management, including recent legal and policy developments, enforcement gaps, and increasing pressures from development activities. By addressing these topics in an open and participatory setting, the project helped bridge communication gaps between stakeholders and foster mutual understanding.

Importantly, these engagements empowered local actors by increasing their awareness of environmental legislation, as well as their rights and responsibilities within decision-making processes. As a result, participants were better equipped to actively contribute to consultations and advocate for the protection of their natural environment.

## Capacity Building for Civil Society and Local Actors

Strengthening the role of civil society was a core objective of the PAMANCA project. Throughout 2025, targeted capacity-building activities were implemented to equip local organizations and community representatives with the knowledge and tools needed to engage effectively in environmental governance.

These efforts focused on enhancing understanding of the legal and institutional frameworks governing protected areas, as well as developing practical skills for monitoring, advocacy, and public participation. Participants were introduced to mechanisms for tracking developments that may impact protected areas and learned how to respond through structured and informed engagement.

By investing in local capacities, the project contributed to creating a more active and informed network of stakeholders of holding institutions accountable and advocating for sustainable management practices. This bottom-up approach is essential for ensuring long-term protection and resilience of Albania's natural ecosystems.

## Strengthening Local Alarm Groups

An important outcome of the project was the consolidation and strengthening of Local Alarm Groups, community-based structures designed to monitor and respond to environmental concerns within protected areas. These groups serve as early warning mechanisms, identifying potential threats and facilitating communication between local communities and relevant authorities.

In 2025, PAMANCA supported these groups by enhancing their organizational capacity and clarifying their role within the broader environmental governance framework. This included providing guidance on how to document and report issues, engage with institutions, and raise awareness within their communities.

The strengthening of Local Alarm Groups represents a significant step toward more responsive and participatory environmental management. By empowering communities to take an active role in protecting their surroundings, the project helps ensure that local knowledge and concerns are integrated into decision-making processes.



## Promoting Transparency and Participatory Governance

Across all its actions, the PAMANCA project placed strong emphasis on promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in the management of protected areas. By fostering dialogue between institutions and communities, the project contributed to building trust and improving the quality of decision-making processes.

The combined efforts of awareness-raising, capacity-building, and community engagement have helped create a more enabling environment for public participation. This is particularly important in the context of balancing conservation objectives with development pressures, where informed and inclusive processes are key to achieving sustainable outcomes.



Overall, PAMANCA has laid important groundwork for a governance model where protected areas are not only managed by institutions but are co-shaped by the communities that depend on and care for them.

**PROJECT**

# ESPID4Vjosa - Enhancing a Science-Policy Interface Development for the Vjosa

**OVERALL GOAL**

Building on previous efforts to highlight the importance of the Vjosa River’s values, EuroNatur and EcoAlbania are implementing the “ESPID4Vjosa” project, which aims to strengthen the link between science, decision-making institutions, and society by enhancing science-based support for governance processes and fostering dialogue among key stakeholders.

**DONOR**

Austrian Development Agency (ADA)

**IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS**

EuroNatur & EcoAlbania

**PROJECT AREA**

Vjosa River Basin

## Project Key Actions

During the reporting period, the ESPID4Vjosa project continued to support the strengthening of the science-policy interface for the sustainable management of the Vjosa River basin. As one of the last free-flowing river systems in Europe, the Vjosa represents a unique ecological corridor with significant biodiversity, hydromorphological, and socio-economic values. The project aimed to further consolidate the link between scientific research, institutional decision-making, and civil society engagement in order to support evidence-based policies and improved river basin governance.

Throughout the year, the project focused on advancing scientific knowledge related to the Vjosa River and its tributaries. Field-based research activities were carried out with the involvement of national and international scientists, researchers, and students, contributing to the collection and analysis of data on biodiversity, water quality, hydromorphology, and riverine habitats. These efforts helped strengthen the scientific baseline needed to better understand the ecological functioning of the river system and to support informed decision-making for its long-term protection and management.

## Steering Committee Meetings

At the governance level, the project continued to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between public institutions, technical experts, and local authorities involved in water management and environmental protection. A series of thematic workshops, consultations, and knowledge-exchange activities supported institutional capacity-building in areas such as integrated river basin management, spatial planning, and public participation in environmental decision-making. These processes contributed to increasing awareness among stakeholders on the importance of incorporating scientific evidence into policy development and planning processes.

Engagement with civil society remained another important component of the project. Throughout the project a network for civil society organizations in the Vosa Basin was created. Capacity-building initiatives supported civil society actors in improving their participation in public consultations, advocacy processes, and local environmental initiatives, contributing to a more inclusive approach to river basin management.



## VCSN Meetings



The Vjosa River Basin Civil Society Network (VCSN) continued to strengthen cooperation among its member organizations through regular coordination meetings focused on defining common priorities and future actions. These meetings provided a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and strategic planning, reinforcing the network's shared commitment to the protection and sustainable management of the Vjosa River basin and its unique ecosystems. Through continued cooperation and collective engagement, the network further consolidated its role as an important civil society platform advocating for environmental protection and community participation in river basin governance.

## Exchange visit in Greece

In addition, the project continued to promote cross-border dialogue and cooperation between Albania and Greece in relation to the shared Vjosa/Aoos river basin. Through joint discussions, knowledge exchanges, and coordination efforts between stakeholders from both countries, the project supported the development of a shared understanding of environmental challenges and opportunities for transboundary cooperation in river management.

Overall, the activities implemented during the reporting period contributed to consolidating the project’s objective of strengthening the interaction between science, policy, and society. By supporting scientific research, institutional dialogue, and community engagement, the project continued to play an important role in promoting evidence-based decision-making and sustainable governance of the Vjosa River basin.



PROJECT

# “Melodies of Nature” Festival

**OVERALL GOAL**

To strengthen the connection between culture, community, and environmental conservation in the Vjosa River Basin by promoting the protection of the Vjosa Wild River through music, traditional arts, and public engagement, while fostering local identity, cultural heritage preservation, and long-term community participation in sustainable environmental advocacy.

**DONOR**

Patagonia

**IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS**

EcoAlbania, Vatra Labe

**PROJECT AREA**

Vjosa River Basin

## Project Key Actions

In this spirit, and as part of the “Save the Blue Heart of Europe” campaign, EcoAlbania organized the folkloric festival “Vjosa – Meloditë e Natyrës” on 4–5 June 2025 in Tepelenë. This two-day cultural celebration brought together over 150 artists and 34 folk groups from across Albania, using music, dance, traditional cuisine, and visual art to highlight the deep connection between people and the river. By integrating environmental advocacy with cultural heritage, the festival served as a powerful reminder that the protection of Vjosa is not only a matter of nature but also of identity, memory, and future prosperity for the communities that call this valley home.

## A Platform for Conservation & Culture

The overwhelmingly positive reception and profound cultural impact of the “Vjosa – Meloditë e Natyrës” festival demonstrate its value as a platform for advancing both environmental conservation and cultural heritage preservation in the Vjosa Valley. The organizing team, in close collaboration with local authorities and partner organizations, is committed to establishing this festival as a tradition linked to the celebration of Vjosa Day, with the potential to expand in scale and impact.



## Building Ownership of the Park



The festival fosters ongoing public engagement and ownership over the future of the Vjosa Wild River National Park. Through music, art, storytelling, and shared experience, the festival strengthens the connection between people and place, thus empowering local residents, especially the younger generation, to become active guardians of their heritage and natural environment. This sustained engagement is essential to ensuring the durability of conservation efforts amid evolving social and economic pressures.

Overall, the “Vjosa – Meloditë e Natyrës” festival represents a strong example of how cultural initiatives can support environmental protection. With continued collaboration and support, it has the potential to remain an effective platform for raising awareness and promoting the conservation of the Vjosa River and its surrounding landscapes.

**PROJECT**

# Supporting and Developing Widening Strategies to Tackle Hydroclimatic Extreme Events (SD - WISHEES)

**OVERALL GOAL**

SD-WISHEES project aims to enable strategic coordination and cross-sector collaboration between national (R&I) funding members, researchers, innovators and a wide variety of stakeholders to address together the protection of cultural heritage in Europe and beyond in response to more and more frequent and severe hydroclimatic extreme events such as droughts and floods.

**DONOR**

HORIZON – EU

**PROJECT AREA**

Mediterranean Basin, Balkan Peninsula and Africa

**IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS**

Consiglio Nazionale Delle Ricerche (CNR) | The African Academy Of Sciences (AAS) | Institut Royal Meteorologique De Belgique (IRM/ KMI) | World Experience For Georgia (WEG) | Maltese Energy And Water Agency (EWA) | Fondazione Centro Euro-Mediterraneo Sui Cambiamenti Climatici (CMCC) | Istituto Superiore Per La Protezione E La Ricerca Ambientale (ISPRA) | Unitatea Executiva Pentru Finantarea Invatamantului Superior A Cercetarii Dezvoltarii Si Inovarii (UEFISCDI) | GSES Management B.V. (GSES) | Agence Nationale De La Recherche (ANR) | Ministero dell’università e della ricerca (MUR) | Universidade De Evora (UEVORA) | Fondacion Prima (PRIMA) | Qendra Per Mbrojtjen E Ekosistemeve Natyrore Ne Shqiperi (EcoAlbania) | Service Public Federal De Programmation Politique Scientifique (BELSPO) | Project Aid LTD

**Project Key Actions**

The SD-WISHEES project focuses on strengthening research and innovation collaboration to address hydroclimatic extreme events, with a particular emphasis on supporting widening countries within the Horizon Europe framework. Bringing together a diverse consortium of partners from multiple countries and sectors, the project aims to foster knowledge exchange, enhance capacities, and promote more inclusive participation in European research and innovation initiatives.

## Integrating Widening Countries



The project builds on the expertise of organizations involved in major European cooperation frameworks, including research funding agencies, research institutions, private sector actors, and civil society organizations. Through this multi-actor approach, SD-WISHEES seeks to bridge gaps between science, policy, and practice, while encouraging cross-sectoral collaboration and innovation in the field of water and climate resilience.

A central objective of the project is to strengthen the integration of widening countries into European research networks by facilitating joint activities, partnerships, and access to funding opportunities. In this context, the project promotes collaborative mechanisms such as Thematic Annual Programming (TAP), which enables the coordination and clustering of research initiatives around shared priorities. This approach supports more efficient use of resources, enhances knowledge sharing, and contributes to the development of coordinated responses to climate-related challenges.



Through its activities, SD-WISHEES aims to improve the capacity of participating countries and institutions to address hydroclimatic risks, while also supporting the development of more resilient and adaptive water management practices. By fostering collaboration, innovation, and knowledge exchange, the project contributes to strengthening Europe-wide efforts to respond to climate change impacts and extreme events.

**PROJECT**

# RESCOM - Nature-Based Solutions on the Buna

**OVERALL GOAL**

Implement Nature based Solutions to prevent riverbank erosion in the Buna river in Albania

**DONOR**

IUCN

**IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS**

EcoAlbania & SISMAE

**PROJECT AREA**

Buna River

## Project Key Actions

The project focuses on addressing riverbank erosion and habitat degradation in vulnerable river systems, where natural dynamics combined with external pressures have led to the loss of riparian land and increased risks for local communities. These processes not only affect ecosystem health but also threaten agricultural activities and livelihoods along riverbanks.

## A Platform for Conservation & Culture

Through the application of nature-based solutions and ecological engineering approaches, the project aims to restore natural river functions, stabilize riverbanks, and improve habitat connectivity. Interventions include the rehabilitation of riparian vegetation and the reactivation of natural water flow patterns, contributing to enhanced biodiversity and greater resilience to climate-related impacts.

A key component of the project is the active involvement of local communities in both planning and implementation. By promoting inclusive and participatory approaches, the project ensures that local knowledge and needs are integrated into restoration measures, while also strengthening environmental awareness and long-term stewardship.

Overall, the project aims to contribute to the restoration of healthy river ecosystems while supporting sustainable land use and improving the resilience of communities living along river corridors.



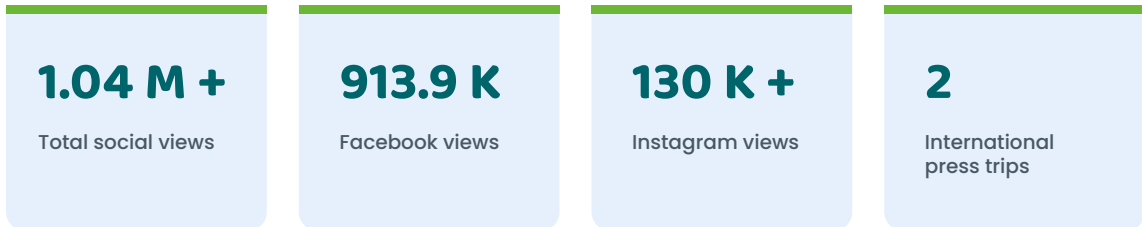
# 05

## Communication

How we informed, engaged, and mobilized in 2025.

VOICE & VISIBILITY

# Communication & outreach



During 2025, EcoAlbania implemented a strategic and impact-oriented communication approach to strengthen public awareness, institutional accountability, and international visibility for the protection of the Vjosa River system and Albania’s protected areas. Communication efforts focused on translating complex environmental issues into accessible and evidence-based narratives, ensuring that key topics remained present in public and policy discourse.

A major communication milestone was the publication and dissemination of the assessment mapping human pressures on the Vjosa Wild River National Park. Accompanied by a high-impact pressures map, the findings were widely shared through digital platforms and served as the foundation for the “Vjosa Threats” awareness campaign. Through visual storytelling, including infographics, short videos, and social media content, the campaign highlighted ongoing environmental pressures and promoted transparency and public engagement. A major communication milestone was the publication and dissemination of the assessment mapping human pressures on the Vjosa Wild River National Park. Accompanied by a high-impact pressures map, the findings were widely shared through digital platforms and served as the foundation for the “Vjosa Threats” awareness campaign. This campaign utilized social media content, including infographics, short videos, and carousel posts, to highlight key environmental challenges and promote transparency.

Media engagement remained a central pillar of the communication strategy. EcoAlbania organized national and international press trips to areas affected by environmental pressures, facilitating field-based reporting and investigative coverage. These efforts resulted in extensive media outputs, including articles and video reports, significantly amplifying national and international attention on the Vjosa and related conservation challenges.

## A Platform for Conservation & Culture

EcoAlbania’s website remains one of the key information-sharing platform with our community providing accessible and reliable information to the public, partners, institutions, and local communities. Throughout the reporting period, the website was regularly updated with project developments, campaign materials, scientific resources, and advocacy-related content. During the year, EcoAlbania published **6 press releases, 15 articles, and 7 reports**, contributing to increased transparency and wider dissemination of environmental information and research findings. The platform also played an important role in supporting awareness-raising and stakeholder engagement efforts by providing centralized access to publications, updates, and multimedia content.



Digital platforms continued to serve as a key outreach tool, contributing to both visibility and audience engagement. Across Facebook and Instagram, EcoAlbania’s content generated over **1,040,000 views**, reaching a broad audience and maintaining strong visibility throughout the year. Engagement remained consistent, with more than 12,500 interactions and over **7,200 link clicks**, reflecting active audience participation and interest in accessing further information and campaign-related content. LinkedIn, in particular with 6206 impressions and **201 reactions**, supported outreach to professional and institutional audiences, strengthening EcoAlbania’s presence within policy and international stakeholder networks.

Platform-specific trends highlight a strategic shift in communication approach. Facebook maintained high overall visibility, generating over **913,900 views**, while Instagram demonstrated strong growth in engagement and audience interaction, with increased profile visits and nearly **1,000 new followers**. This reflects a more targeted and impact-driven communication strategy, prioritizing meaningful engagement and audience connection over broad reach.

Communication efforts also supported advocacy and legal initiatives by informing the public about policy developments, court proceedings, and institutional decisions impacting protected areas. By combining scientific evidence, community voices, and media visibility, EcoAlbania reinforced its mission to protect free-flowing rivers and promote sustainable environmental governance.

Overall, communication activities throughout the year contributed to increased public awareness, stronger stakeholder engagement, and sustained visibility for the protection of the Vjosa River and Albania’s natural heritage.

# 06

## Financials

How the organization was funded and how every euro was put to work.

FINANCIAL

# Financial overview



## Revenue

EcoAlbania’s revenues are generated primarily from grants, which constitute the main source of funding for its activities. A smaller share, less than 1% comes from donations and other sources. This funding structure suggests a stable and predictable financial base, enabling EcoAlbania to plan and implement its programs effectively.

## Expenditures

Human Resources		€ 245,931.00	(46%)
<i>Staff salaries</i>		€ 133,856.00	(25%)
<i>Expert fees</i>		€ 112,075.00	(21%)
Activities		€ 231,942.00	(43%)
Administrative costs		€ 28,005.00	(5%)
Other Expenses		€ 24,417.00	(5%)
Assets		€ 2,954.00	(1%)

**Total expenditures** € 533,249

# 07

## Reflections & Outlook

What we learned in 2025, and where we are headed in 2026.

  
REFLECTIONS

# Challenges & lessons learned

The year 2025 represented an important phase of growth and consolidation for EcoAlbania, but it also highlighted a number of persistent and emerging challenges linked to environmental governance, conservation implementation, and sustainable development in Albania. These experiences provided valuable lessons that will continue to shape the organization's strategic direction and strengthen its long-term impact.

One of the most significant challenges remained the increasing pressure on river ecosystems and protected areas from infrastructure development, water abstraction, extractive industries, and unregulated tourism. The case of the Shushica River demonstrated how environmental protection efforts often face complex institutional procedures, limited transparency, and competing economic interests. While advocacy and legal actions succeeded in mobilizing national and international attention, the process reaffirmed that conservation achievements require constant vigilance, long-term commitment, and rapid response mechanisms.

Another key challenge was the gap between environmental legislation and its effective implementation. Although Albania has made important progress in strengthening legal frameworks for biodiversity and protected areas, enforcement capacities at institutional and local levels remain uneven. EcoAlbania's work with magistrates, prosecutors, judges, civil society organizations, and local communities highlighted the importance of investing not only in policies, but also in the human and institutional capacities necessary to apply them effectively. Stronger cooperation between institutions, scientists, and local actors remains essential for ensuring accountability and sustainable management of natural resources.

The organization also faced challenges related to balancing conservation objectives with local socio-economic realities. Communities living near protected areas and river systems are directly affected by environmental degradation, but they are equally impacted by limited economic opportunities and development pressures. These experiences reinforced the importance of participatory approaches that place local communities at the center of conservation efforts. Initiatives such as community meetings, environmental education, restoration activities, and cultural events demonstrated that long-term protection is only possible when local people feel ownership over conservation processes and recognize the direct benefits of preserving nature.

At the same time, EcoAlbania learned that effective communication and storytelling are increasingly critical tools for environmental advocacy. Translating scientific findings and technical assessments into accessible and engaging narratives proved essential for increasing public awareness and mobilizing broader support. The success of awareness campaigns, press trips, and digital outreach confirmed that combining science, community voices, culture, and media engagement can significantly strengthen public participation and institutional accountability.

Another important lesson from 2025 was the value of partnerships and interdisciplinary collaboration. The organization's cooperation with international institutions, universities, civil society organizations, local authorities, and grassroots communities strengthened both the credibility and effectiveness of its work. Scientific collaboration, particularly through initiatives such as Science Week and cross-border cooperation in the Vjosa basin, demonstrated that environmental challenges require integrated solutions that connect science, policy, and society.

Looking ahead, EcoAlbania recognizes that protecting Albania's natural ecosystems will require sustained advocacy, stronger governance, increased public participation, and long-term investment in ecological resilience. The lessons learned throughout 2025 reaffirm the organization's belief that durable conservation outcomes can only be achieved through inclusive, science-based, and community-driven approaches that balance environmental integrity with human well-being.

PRIORITIES

# Looking ahead to 2026

Building on the achievements and lessons of 2025, EcoAlbania will continue to strengthen its role as a leading environmental organization dedicated to the protection of Albania’s rivers, biodiversity, and natural ecosystems. In 2026, the organization will focus on consolidating existing conservation gains while expanding its efforts to address emerging environmental challenges through science-based, community-driven, and participatory approaches.

**1 Vjosa & Tributaries**

Long-term protection and effective management of the Vjosa Wild River National Park.

**2 Ecological Corridors**

Integration of corridors into regional planning and sustainable land-use policies.

**3 Science & Evidence**

Deeper cooperation with academic institutions on biodiversity, hydrology, and ecosystem health.

**4 Youth & Community**

Continued investment in environmental education, local participation, and grassroots action.

**5 Communication**

Innovative storytelling, digital campaigns, and stronger international visibility.

**6 Climate Resilience**

Greater focus on nature-based solutions and ecosystem restoration.

A key priority will remain the long-term protection and effective management of the Vjosa Wild River National Park, including continued advocacy for the protection of its tributaries and ecological integrity. Particular attention will be given to strengthening river basin governance, monitoring environmental pressures, and supporting institutional accountability to ensure that conservation standards are fully implemented in practice.

EcoAlbania will also continue advancing ecological connectivity initiatives, with a stronger focus on integrating ecological corridors into regional planning and sustainable land-use policies. Through collaboration with institutions, researchers, and local stakeholders, the organization aims to promote landscape-scale conservation approaches that improve habitat resilience and biodiversity protection across Albania.

Scientific research and evidence-based advocacy will remain central to EcoAlbania's work. In 2026, the organization will deepen cooperation with national and international academic institutions, expand field-based monitoring activities, and support the generation of scientific knowledge that informs environmental decision-making. Strengthening the science-policy interface will continue to be essential for promoting sustainable management of rivers and protected areas.

Community engagement and youth empowerment will remain a strategic priority. EcoAlbania will further invest in environmental education, local participation, and grassroots initiatives that strengthen public ownership of conservation efforts. By working closely with local communities, schools, and civil society actors, the organization aims to build long-term environmental stewardship and resilience at the local level.

At the same time, EcoAlbania will continue expanding its communication and outreach efforts to engage wider audiences nationally and internationally. Through innovative storytelling, digital campaigns, media collaboration, and cultural initiatives, the organization will seek to increase awareness of Albania's natural heritage and mobilize broader support for environmental protection.

Finally, in response to increasing climate and environmental pressures, EcoAlbania will place greater emphasis on nature-based solutions, ecosystem restoration, and climate resilience. By linking conservation with sustainable development and community well-being, the organization aims to contribute to a future where both nature and people can thrive together.

Through these priorities, EcoAlbania enters 2026 committed to strengthening partnerships, amplifying impact, and continuing its mission to safeguard Albania's unique ecosystems for future generations.

# Stay connected

Join us in protecting Albania's natural heritage.

## WEBSITE

[www.ecoalbania.org](http://www.ecoalbania.org)

## EMAIL

[contact@ecoalbania.org](mailto:contact@ecoalbania.org)

## SOCIAL

[@ecoalbania](#)