



for a living planet®

saving nature with EU neighbours



introduction

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The European Neighbourhood Policy continues to be an important focus for WWF's work. The neighbouring countries have a rich heritage of species, natural areas and landscapes which in themselves are hugely important to protect. They are also key for economic and social development. Many of the mountainous regions, forests, oceans, coastlines and river floodplains are still relatively intact and provide critical environmental services for local populations and national economies. In various regions of the neighbouring countries WWF project staff are implementing on the ground projects that bring sustainable development to life. Some of these projects are described in this leaflet.

We are beginning to see enormous pressures building up that will put a great strain on these natural resources. Land for growing food; forests for paper, pulp and construction; water for growing crops; rivers for navigation and coastal resources for commercial fishing and tourism; and continued demands for oil and gas extraction are just some of the resources under stress. On top of this comes the daunting spectre of climate change impacts which will affect natural resource availability in unpredictable ways.

One thing is becoming very clear. A project by project approach to partnership and cooperation with the EU's neighbouring countries is going to be insufficient to tackle the environmental challenges. Adaptation to climate change, such as coping with freshwater shortages or safeguarding productive land from effects of desertification, is going to require more sophisticated, sector-wide planning approaches than before. In fact, natural resource security and climate change security

are rapidly becoming synonymous with political security. International cooperation to safeguard the environment is increasingly being seen as a contribution to peace and security - and therefore a foreign policy issue of growing importance.

There are signs of a better understanding of the scale and urgency of the environmental threats and resulting population disruptions facing the neighbouring countries. WWF hopes and expects that, in a rapidly changing world, regional cooperation for environmental protection and climate change adaptation will be used to its fullest extent under the European Neighbourhood Policy and that new standards for international environmental cooperation will be set.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Long', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Tony Long
Director, WWF European Policy Office
August 2007

saving nature with
EU neighbours



Many of the last natural and semi-natural areas in Europe are found in countries neighbouring the European Union. WWF identified the Caucasus, the Mediterranean and the Danube-Carpathian regions among the 200 most important ecoregions on Earth. They are not only rich in diversity of flora and fauna, but they are also essential for livelihoods and socio-economic development of their inhabitants.

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

The European Neighbourhood Policy was launched by the European Union in 2004 to create peaceful borders and prosperity in Europe's surrounding countries from the Mediterranean up to the Caspian*. Between 2007 and 2013, the financial mechanism for the neighbourhood policy, called European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), will provide some € 12 billion to support a variety of political, economic, social and environmental reforms within these countries and across national borders.

An opportunity or a threat for the environment ?

WWF sees the European Neighbourhood Policy as a major opportunity to protect and manage in a sustainable way natural resources and ecosystems such as forests, mountains, wetlands, rivers, seas and coastlines. This policy can also contribute to the transfer of new environmental technologies that could help cut down on pollution and wasteful consumption of natural resources. However, ENP projects related to issues such as transport, energy and tourism may also put at risk sensitive natural areas, unless their environmental impact is properly assessed and monitored in consultation with the civil society. Public participation, transparency and good governance are key in this process.

Greening the European Neighbourhood Policy

WWF has been working since 2005, at EU level and in the neighbouring countries, in the following areas:

- **Policy** dialogue to help shape sustainable ENP policy and projects;
- **Capacity building** to enhance local NGOs participation in the definition, the implementation and the monitoring of the European Neighbourhood Policy;
- **Pilot projects** to promote sustainable management of natural resources and alternative sources of income for local communities.

* Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine



new life for ukraine's
danube delta

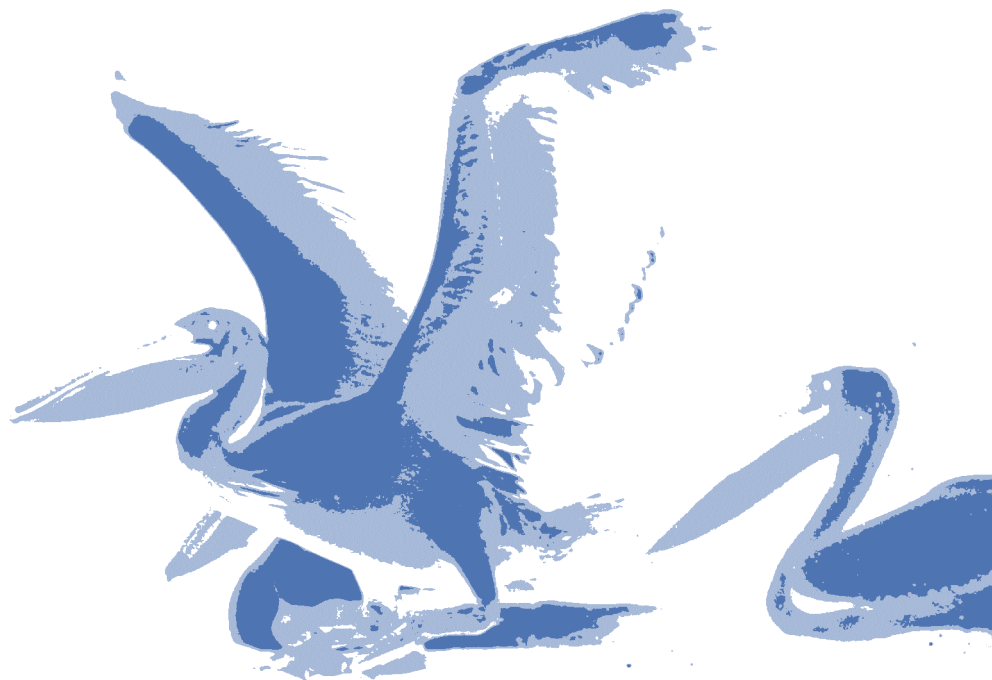
Because of its remarkable natural wealth, the Danube Delta is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and is protected by a number of international agreements, including the Ramsar Convention on the protection of wetlands. Shared by Romania, Ukraine and Moldova, the Danube Delta is the second largest wetland in Europe and the largest reed-bed in the world. It is an important area for birds and fish, including globally threatened species such as the red breasted goose, the white pelican and beluga sturgeon. Parts of the delta's wetlands were drained and diked between the 1960s and 1980s to make way for agriculture. However, the experiment failed, and many of the areas became barren, offering very limited benefits for nature or humans. Today, pollution, increased exploitation of resources and disruption of natural processes, including the ongoing construction of the Bystroye shipping canal by Ukraine, continue to be major threats to the delta.

WWF activities

Since the early 1990s WWF has been working with Ukrainian, Romanian, Moldovan and Bulgarian authorities and local groups to restore wetlands and help create the Lower Danube Green Corridor. This is a network of restored and protected areas of nearly one million hectares stretching 1000 kilometres along the Lower Danube from the Iron Gates between Romania and Serbia to the Black Sea, and including the Danube Delta. In Ukraine, WWF has worked, amongst others, with the Odessa provincial water authorities and the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Administration to develop and implement a vision for the restoration and protection of the Ukrainian part of the delta.

Results

As a result of WWF projects, in 2005 dikes were removed from the Ukrainian Tataru Island, permitting Danube floodwaters to return and gradually restore the former rich wetland habitats as well as provide a new home for several colonies of globally threatened pygmy cormorants. A herd of hardy Ukrainian grey cattle has been introduced to help break up dense forests and diversify habitats while providing meat and income for local villages. Discussions are underway with tourist operators regarding bird watching and angling on the island. Similar projects are moving forward in other parts of the delta, demonstrating the benefits for nature and humans of restoring the delta's rich ecosystems.



protect the forests
in georgia and azerbaijan



As home to unique flora and fauna and source of supporting income for rural populations depending on farming, the area of the Iori River, across the borders of Georgia and Azerbaijan, is a top priority for preservation of biodiversity in South Caucasus. It hosts one of the last remnants of floodplain forests in the region, an important stopover site for migrating birds. On the Georgian side, the Chachuna sanctuary is a protected area. Because of poor management and lack of enforcement capacities, floodplain forest ecosystems have been severely damaged by overgrazing, illegal logging, fuel wood harvesting and unsustainable infrastructure development. An example of the latter is the Dali reservoir, constructed for irrigating this arid area. The irrigation plans proved to be infeasible, leaving a 50 metres high dam blocking the Iori river valley, disrupting the hydrological regime and putting at risk these sensitive forest ecosystems.

WWF activities

WWF has been working since 2004 with local partners and regional authorities to halt degradation of the threatened floodplain forests in the area of the Iori

river valley and develop cross-border cooperation. Special routes were agreed upon with local farmers to provide sheep with access to water while avoiding overgrazing and damage to young trees. WWF also carries out capacity-building activities for people working in protected areas and environmental education projects for women and children on how to preserve the forest ecosystems.

Results

WWF managed to stop floodplain forest degradation by strengthening the environmental governance in the Chachuna Sanctuary. Law enforcement has significantly improved and damaging activities were stopped. WWF also helped to restore the natural flood regime of the Iori River, which is now once more providing a regular natural water supply to forest ecosystems. In future, restored floodplain forests will also offer unique opportunities for developing sustainable ecotourism and farming in the area.



A large pile of harvested cork bark is the central focus of the image. The bark is dark brown and textured, with some pieces showing a lighter, fibrous interior. It is piled haphazardly, creating a sense of abundance. In the background, a dense forest of cork oak trees with thick, gnarled trunks and lush green foliage is visible. The ground is covered with dry leaves and small green plants. The overall scene is a natural, outdoor setting, likely a cork oak forest in Morocco.

pop the cork
in morocco

Cork oak forests are amongst the richest in the world in terms of biodiversity and represent a vital source of income for thousands of people in the Mediterranean region. Because cork is bark from a tree which renews itself after harvesting, commercial exploitation is already environmentally friendly as no trees are actually cut down. Cork production alone in Morocco provides an annual income of approximately € 10 million, representing 30 per cent of the country's total forestry sector income. In 1920, the coastal Maâmora forest, in the North West of the country, was the biggest cork oak forest in the world covering more than 130,000 hectares. Today this is reduced to only 60,000 hectares due to conversion into exotic species plantations and lack of proper management. These threats, including overexploitation such as overgrazing, exacerbated by climate change, increase the forests vulnerability to diseases, pests, fires and desertification and could lead to further biodiversity loss.

WWF activities

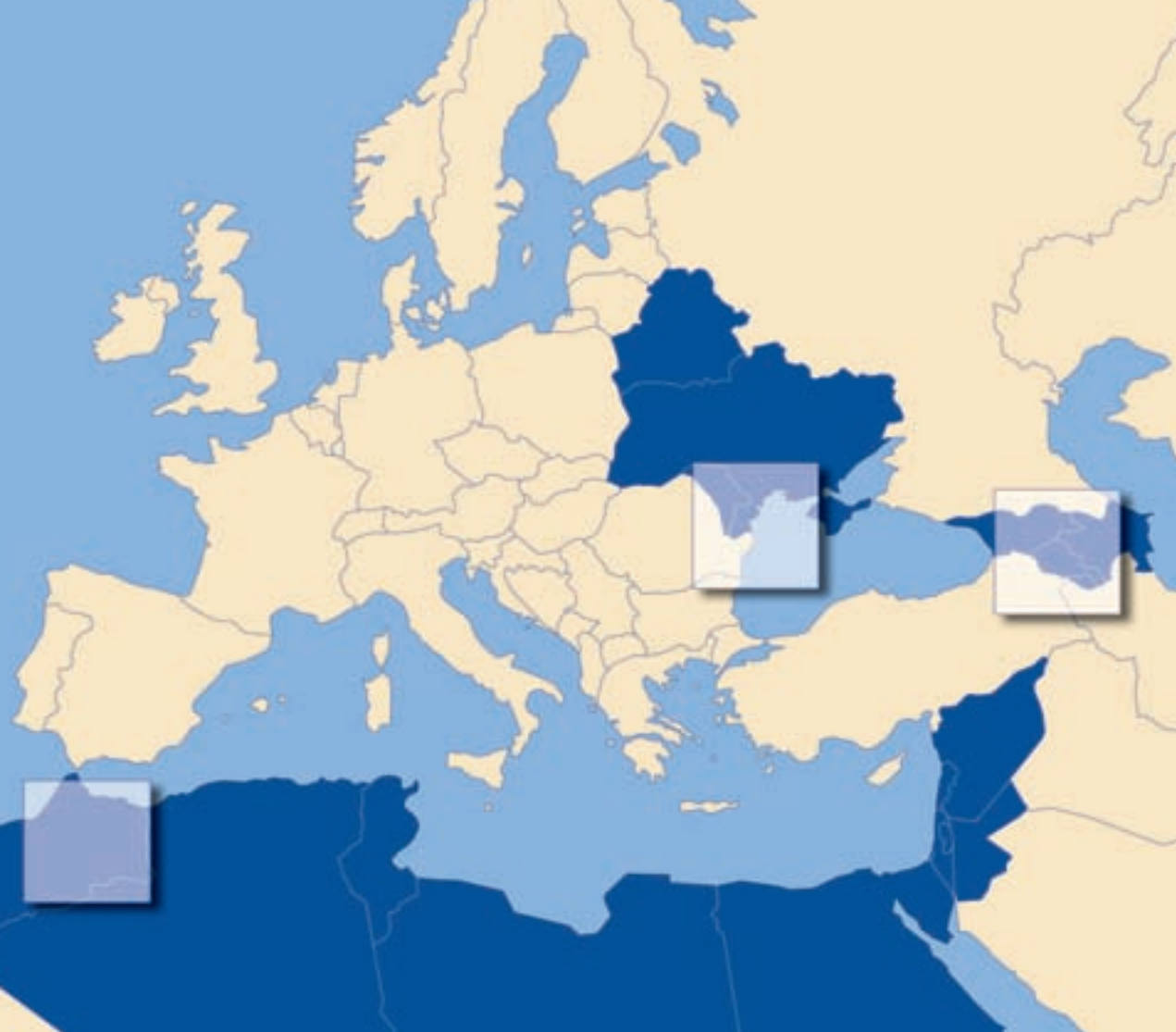
WWF is working with Moroccan authorities and local partners in the Rif region, Northern Morocco, to raise awareness on the environmental goods and services provided by cork oak forests, to save biodiversity and to support livelihoods for people living in these areas. WWF is helping to increase forest managers' and local communities' capacity for restoring the forests and their surrounding landscapes as well as to promote best management practices. A pilot project for landscape restoration is helping to recover a wide range of plant species that

on the one hand stabilise soil against erosion and on the other hand could contribute to local development through their use in medicinal, aromatic and honey production. WWF also promotes Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification of cork oak forests as a tool to recognise responsible forest management and to generate social, environmental and direct economic benefits for local communities. Training courses on how to restore and manage cork oak forests in a sustainable way were organised. WWF invited staff from Moroccan forestry directorates and NGOs to visit cork forests in Portugal and Spain in order to exchange experiences on management and restoration issues.

Results

The decision by the Moroccan Government to engage in the FSC certification system, a label allowing consumers worldwide to choose products that come from responsibly managed forests, is the major achievement of this project to date. Such commitment will contribute to long term survival of the country's 9 million hectares of forest and grassland, an important step in the fight against desertification and poverty.





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WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption

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