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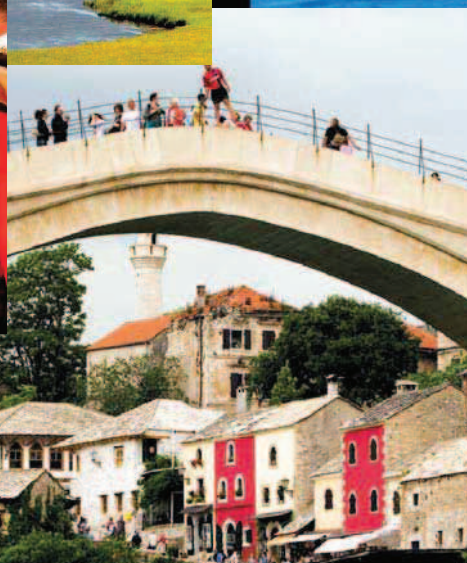
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the Dinaric Arc Initiative



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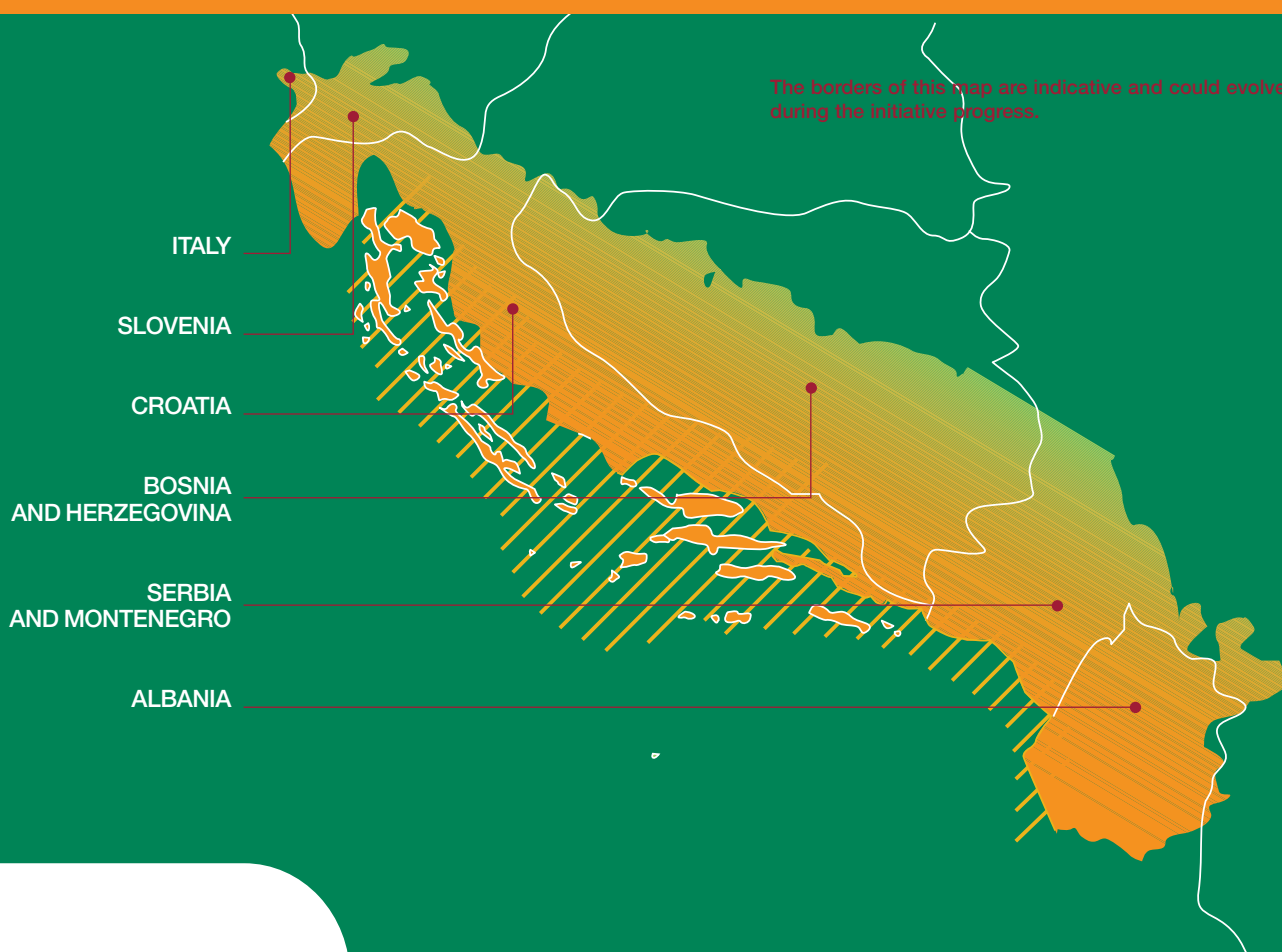
DAI

the Dinaric Arc Initiative



The Dinaric Arc

WWF, UNESCO-BRESCE, UNDP, IUCN, the Council of Europe, FAO, Euronatur and SNV are concerned with the future of the Dinaric Arc and are active in the region with a varied portfolio of projects and initiatives to secure the long-term conservation and sustainable development of this part of Europe. These institutions have joined forces and created **the Dinaric Arc Initiative (DAI)**.



Cover
Traditional dance, island of Lastovo, Croatia
© WWF-Mediterranean / P. Guglielmi

Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*)
© WWF-Mediterranean / F. Antonelli

Duman karst's spring, Livno,
Bosnia and Herzegovina
© WWF-Mediterranean / M. Gunther

Mostar bridge, Mostar,
Bosnia and Herzegovina
© WWF-Mediterranean / M. Gunther





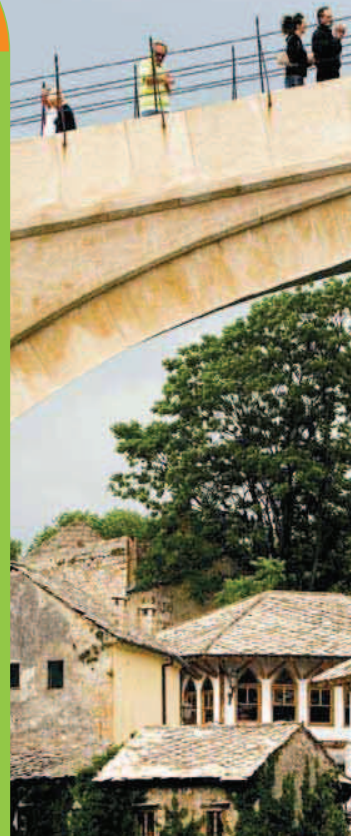
A unique world of nature and people where eastern Europe meets the Mediterranean

The Dinaric Arc is a region of south-eastern Europe with a surface of approximately 100,000km² and more than 6,000km of coastline, encompassing the whole region facing the eastern Adriatic Sea, from the area of Trieste (Italy) to Tirana (Albania). It includes portions of Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, FYR Macedonia, and Albania.

The relatively high Dinaric Alps (maximum height is 2,764m) run parallel to the eastern Adriatic coast, and are famous for their karstic geology –Livanjsko Polje in western Bosnia being the largest karstic field in the world. Towards the southern end of the region, the Prokletije Massif and the “Albanian Alps” are among the wildest mountains in Europe.

The Dinaric Arc hosts important freshwater ecosystems, including the most extended network of subterranean rivers and lakes in Europe, and wetlands of international importance, such as the Neretva delta

(Bosnia and Herzegovina/Croatia), and Skadar/Shkodra lake (Montenegro/Albania). The river Tara is well known for forming a long and wild canyon, one of the deepest in the world. The Eastern Adriatic coast still includes unspoiled tracts, with limited major mass tourism development. Hundreds of islands characterise the eastern Adriatic coast, from Brioni to Sazan, giving way to a variety of seascapes and coastal/marine ecosystems. The extremely indented Bay of Kotor is unique in the Mediterranean, while the coast of Albania is amongst the wildest in the whole Mediterranean basin.





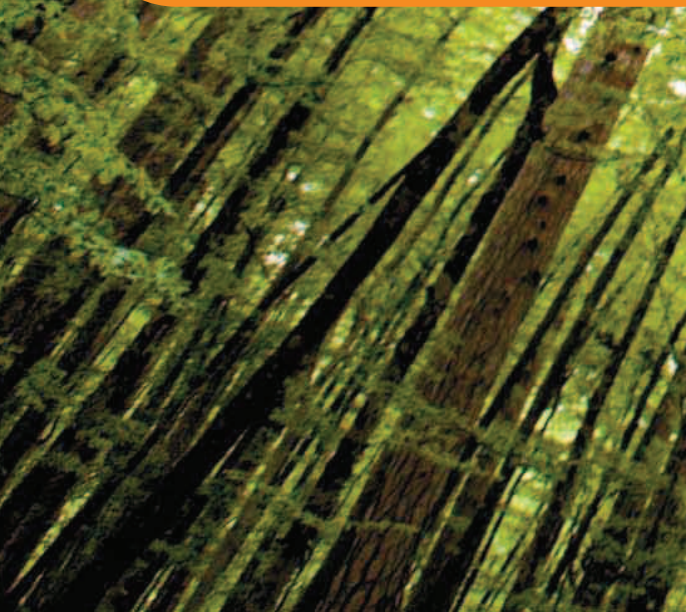
the Dinaric Arc Initiative

The Dinaric Arc Initiative (DAI) is a broad framework of collaboration which aims to add value to the ongoing programmes and activities of all its partners, and put in place new specific actions aiming at:

- The preservation of the wealth and integrity of the Dinaric Arc through the establishment of networks of protected areas and ecological corridors, and support to initiatives for the conservation of its biological diversity and the sustainable management of its resources
- The preservation and valorisation of the cultural diversity and the cultural heritage of the Dinaric Arc
- The promotion of intercultural dialogue, trans-boundary collaboration and scientific cooperation among the countries of the region

- The empowerment of local societies to foster local community development through rural development measures based on the valorisation of the natural and cultural heritage, without over-exploiting the capital of natural resources
- The integration of environmental policies across all the relevant sectoral initiatives.

The partners of the DAI expect to reach these ambitious objectives by encouraging the development of diversified initiatives and putting in place specific field projects, supporting policy and advocacy processes, helping build the capacity of key stakeholders in the region, and promoting awareness and education campaigns for target audiences in the countries of the Dinaric Arc.





the **Dinaric** heritage: natural and cultural landscapes

Over the millennia, low-intensity farming practices have created semi-natural habitats throughout the Mediterranean region which integrate forest, pasture and cropland, and provide a home for unique sets of species. These complex mosaics are still present throughout the Dinaric Arc. Some of the most relevant conservation values and favourable conditions for conservation along the Dinaric Arc include:

- Large and well-preserved forests with high flora diversity of species and a high rate of endemism (10-20% of all the plants are endemic to the region)
- Unique karst ecosystems and cave habitats with a diversity of invertebrates, fish, amphibians, and reptiles
- The Dinaric mountains harbour important populations of large carnivores — lynx, brown bear, wolf, jackal — that use them as a crucial ecological corridor between the Alps and the mountains of south-eastern Europe
- The numerous wetlands and freshwater habitats host important nesting populations of endangered bird species, including the Dalmatian pelican, pygmy cormorant, collared pratincole, Baillon's crane and many others, and are an important stop over and wintering site for migrating birds
- The variety of coastal and marine habitats — which include shallow reefs, Posidonia meadows, small rocks and archipelagos, high coasts, and caves — are feeding and breeding grounds for cetaceans, sea birds, and marine turtles





- The eastern Adriatic is one of the richest fishing grounds of the Mediterranean. It also hosts the most diverse commercial marine species in the Basin
- The presence of many nature-friendly, traditional economic activities, traditional forestry, and small scale fisheries form a valuable basis for the sustainable development of the rural and natural regions of the Dinaric Arc
- A high diversity of crop varieties and local livestock breeds still exist, and are maintained thanks to typical and traditional farming and production systems.

Southeast Europe has historically been a rich ensemble of cultures and religions, mainly due to its position as a meeting point between Western Europe and the Middle East. This unique background is reflected in a wide and varied cultural heritage. The location and geographical distribution of many settlements reflect a search for harmony in the development of towns and their natural surroundings: Kotor and its bay, and Dubrovnik and the

coastline, are two symbolic examples of this. Unfortunately, such symbols of cultural and natural unity have frequently been targets during the conflicts that have afflicted the region. Traces of the ancient borders (e.g. the Roman Limes along the Danube River) and more recent ones (the Iron Curtain) are relevant elements of cultural landscapes that are important to protect and value within local development frameworks.

Local heritage –the result of the long interaction between human settlements and their natural settings — can be an important factor in fostering mutual understanding between various communities and a means of focusing their rapid national socio-economic transitions. The Dinaric Arc Initiative intends to facilitate this process, serving as a cross-sectoral framework of cooperation, where natural and cultural assets are harmonized within common territorial and development frameworks.





Tara River forest, Durmitor National Parc,
Serbia and Montenegro
© WWF-Mediterranean / M. Gunther

Island of Lastovo, Croatia
© WWF-Mediterranean / P. Guglielmi

Children of the island of Vis, Croatia
© WWF-Mediterranean / I. Bura

Gecko (*Salamandra salamandra*)
© WWF-Mediterranean / M. Salihovic

River in grassland, Bosnia and Herzegovina
© WWF-Mediterranean / M. Gunther

Sharri sheep - strain of Pramenka breed

Grey wolf (*Canis lupus*)
© WWF-Canon / C.M. Bahr

Traditional dance, island of Lastovo, Croatia
© WWF-Mediterranean / P. Guglielmi

Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*)
© WWF-Mediterranean / I. Dobrovic

Cijevna river going to Skadar lake,
Serbia and Montenegro
© WWF-Mediterranean / M. Gunther

Old men, Durazzo, Albania
© WWF-Mediterranean / P. Guglielmi

present and future challenges

Over the last twenty years the countries of the Dinaric Arc have experienced periods of high instability, conflicts, economic crises and transition towards a market economy and European integration. Environmental policies and institutions have suffered a long period of eclipse and are now being rebuilt, although with varying results. The whole region is currently undergoing rapid economic development, and the need to generate income and improve living standards, especially in rural areas, is leading to the growing exploitation of natural resources. Development is both a threat to and an

opportunity for the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the Dinaric Arc.

Among the major current and future threats are: illegal logging, deforestation, poaching, river damming and diversion, unregulated coastal development, unregulated exploitation of marine resources, unsustainable use of agricultural land and pastures.

A complex governance system, the unsatisfactory level of enforcement of existing laws, and a widespread lack of capacity are limiting factors and additional challenges to the sound development of the region.

two years of DAI

DAI recently celebrated its second birthday with a very satisfactory record of work and achievements. Since its foundation, DAI has added value to the work and programmes of all its partner institutions, but it has also been the framework for the development of new, joint programmes. "DAI labelled" initiatives led by one or more DAI partners have occurred, including:

- Training course 'NGO Capacity Building in Networking and Communication', Shkodra (AL), October 2005, organized by IUCN
- 'Biking the Balkans', an initiative to promote a regional network of local sustainable development experiences in South-East Europe, June/July 2006, organized by UNESCO-BRESCE
- International workshop 'Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity –Programme of Work on Protected Areas in the Dinaric Arc countries', Belgrade, March 2006, organized by WWF and IUCN
- International training for MAB Biosphere Reserve Stakeholders in South-East Europe, Virpazar (CG) and Shkodra (AL), October 2006, organized by UNESCO-BRESCE.

In the autumn of 2005, DAI fostered the event 'Lake Skadar international designations for Territorial Development', which was attended by the Prime Ministers of Albania and Montenegro and contributed to the designation of a protected area on the Albanian side of lake Skadar/Shkodra. DAI partners are now working to develop a joint framework for the transboundary management of this exceptional territory, unique in Europe.

DAI partners are also engaged in the development of the initiative's first joint field project: 'The territorial management of Karst Poljes — the case of Livanjsko and Sinjsko Polje', a multi-purpose action framework to conserve the outstanding natural and cultural heritage of some of the world's most important karst habitats, while promoting rural development and the equitable sharing of the resources of the region amongst its population.