



PA Ecological Society "BIOTICA" Annual Activity Report for 2023

In January 2022, the PA ES BIOTICA approved the 2022-2024 Development Strategy during the 21st General Assembly meeting, on 28.01.2022. The strategy identified three key development directions: improved conditions for biodiversity, raised resilience of communities in target areas, and consolidation of internal capacities and partnerships. Thus, the following development directions were identified:

- 1. Improved conditions for biodiversity by rehabilitation of ecosystems, safeguarding endangered and rare species, and promotion of sustainable development (with a focus on target areas)*
- 2. Raised resilience of communities from the target areas.*

Activities carried out within the Outcome 1."Improved conditions for biodiversity by rehabilitation of ecosystems, safeguarding endangered and rare species, and promotion of sustainable development (with a focus on target areas)"

During 2023, in order to contribute to the improvement of the conditions of the rare species of plants and animals, some research of the rare plants in their natural habitats was done by the members of SE BIOTICA and hired specialists. Also, a study was developed related to the role of the forest belts that was used for an informative campaign conducted by ES BIOTICA especially among the farmers that have agricultural lands. The study was developed by Andrei Gumovschi, PhD, expert in agriculture and information was used during meetings with farmers and the informative campaign, including a press conference organized on this topic.



Based on the research of the birds that need shelter to have better life conditions 3 species of birds (*Ciconia Ciconia*, *Cygnus olor*, *Falco Vespertinus*) were selected for which to install artificial nests. Based on the studies, a popular brochure about the role of the forest belts for agriculture and biodiversity was edited and spread among the interested persons, including schools and farmers from the protected areas and at the meetings organized by BIOTICA in the target areas.



BIOTICA submitted its proposal for improvement of the Environmental Strategy, Forest Code. The meetings that the organization held in relation with the level of the implementation of the Program of extension and rehabilitation of the forest of the Republic of Moldova that was approved in 2022 gathered important actors involved in the implementation of the program, as well as representatives of the donors; some proposals related to the efficiency and

improvements were discussed and proposed to the Ministry of Environment and Agency Moldsilva as a result of these meetings.



In 2023 BIOTICA contribute to the improved capacities of the ecosystems through aforestation on 13 ha in Cirnateni and Balabanesti villages. Common ash, maple, European white elm white willow and various other hardy trees, with the support of Sweden and PA "Parcurile viitorului". Additionally, along the Baltata river, approx. 1 ha of land was planted (mainly willow and poplar) with the on a length of a 1 km to create new habitats in its protection zone, as well as to rehabilitate the small river within the Czech

Transition program funded project "Guardians of Moldovan Nature: Enforcing the rights of the communities on both banks of the Dniester". In the Iagorlic nature reserve (left bank of Dniester) in order to improve the habitats, 200 trees, mainly limes and oaks, were planted with the involvement of volunteers on the territory of the scientific reserve in the Czech



Transition program funded project. Together with the Inspectorate for the Protection of the Environment Ștefan Vodă, Talmază City Hall and economic agents from the "Lower Dniester" National Park, we succeed to contribute to a better condition for the Blind Dniester, a monument of nature and the largest natural reservoir of water in the country, by removing a dam that was illegally installed on the water course, with the aim of retaining the water and the fish populations that use this place to perpetuate their species. This is also a support of local biodiversity. To improve the living conditions for birds, 8 artificial nests were made and installed on the right bank of the Dniester, along the Dniester for Ciconia Ciconia, 5 for Cygnus olor and 10 for Falco Vespertinus close to their habitats.



In order to improve habitat conditions and to contribute to the improved population of the rare species, BIOTICA team together with the botanists from the Iagorlic Nature Reserve, replanted some saplings of Trápa nátans and Salvinia natans in the water bodies of the reserve. These plants not only participate in the transformation of carbon dioxide into oxygen, but also in water purification processes, thanks to its chemical properties, as well as thanks to the organisms that live in the formations of the populations of these plants.

Within the Lower Dniester National Park, BIOTICA team together with the botanists from the Iagorlic Nature Reserve and right bank, planted in 4 locations about a hundred saplings of Acorus calamus, a protected specie of herbaceous, vivacious plant with a pleasant aromatic smell that grows in marshy places. Also 10 Nuphar lutea were replanted from Tudora in the Talmază meadow area. This species is valuable and protected, included in the operational list of the National Ecological Network of the Republic of Moldova. It is an important component of aquatic ecosystems. At its roots, fish and other aquatic organisms often hide, and the leaves and flowers provide shelter and food for various types of insects and birds. At the same time, for water, such "shading" is very useful - such a green blanket saves the pond from excessive evaporation, and the sun's rays reflected by



the leaves do not overheat the water, which is especially important recently when high temperatures dry bodies of water.

2 winter animal nutrition facilities were installed in the Orhei National Park and the "Codrii" Nature Reserve.



Since the zoning system is very important for the protection of valuable ecosystems, the process of designating protection zones in the Orhei National Park has been continued, marking the integral protection areas A (or group T0 in forestry language) in the Țigănești Landscape Reserve, I partnership with the Orhei National Park and foremen from the Bravicea forest bypass and the forest inspectors within the park. This practice is extremely necessary to mark the areas that carry and preserve within themselves the argument of the existence of the National Park as a protected natural area.

The events organized by ES BIOTICA in 2023 played a pivotal role in enhancing in-country capacities related to protected area management. These events, attended by various stakeholders, facilitated knowledge sharing, problem-solving, and proposal generation among administrations of protected areas, local public authorities, and relevant actors in the field.

Key Events:

- **Lower Dniester National Park Meeting:** A gathering of representatives from the Ministry of Environment, Codrii, Pădurea Domnească, Orhei cultural-natural reserve, mayors, NGOs, and national experts (23 participants, including 12 women) discussed steps to improve the management of protected areas.
- **Iagorlic Reserve Meeting:** Representatives from the reserve, scientists, activists, business professionals, and NGOs participated in discussions (22 participants, 10 women) aimed at sharing achievements, addressing challenges, and proposing solutions.
- **Meetings in national parks:** Representatives of protected areas and other stakeholders convened in Chișinău, Butuceni, Stefan-Vodă (48 participants, including 23 women) for discussions on planned activities in the coming years and the challenges faced by protected areas.
- **Study Visit in Balti:** A visit to Balti showcased practical activities that can be implemented in protected areas (17 participants, 7 women).
- **Study Tour in Romania:** A study tour in Romania (20 participants, 8 women) for six days provided insights into the management of protected areas. The delegation visited Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad, the Arad County Council, the Lunca Mureșului Natural Park, and the Danube Delta biosphere reserve. The study tour covered over 2500 km, offering participants valuable knowledge and professional impressions. Collaborators from other protected natural areas in Romania met the delegation, sharing experiences and projects. Practical examples, including a site under ecological reconstruction of a flooded wetland, illustrated the Romanian approach to protected area management.



Collaborations and Partnerships:

- Several meetings were organized with representatives of institutions active in related fields, resulting in the



establishment of partnerships through formal agreements.

- Three meetings in Chisinau addressed topics such as protected area management, tourism development, and issues in the forestry system.

Activities carried out within the Outcome 2 "Increasing the resilience of communities in the target areas,".

During the reporting period, BIOTICA organized working group meetings in all villages surrounding the Lower Dniester National Park, conducting approximately two meetings in each village. These gatherings served as platforms for engaging citizens in discussions about the future steps following the creation of the national park, addressing existing problems, and exploring potential solutions.

Issues Addressed in Working Groups:

- **Waste Management:** Citizens actively participated in discussions about waste management, leading to practical solutions for collecting and disposing of plastic in villages.
- **Infrastructure Challenges:** Local working groups focused on addressing infrastructure challenges, such as sewage system deficiencies, road quality, and the ecological reconstruction of the old bed of the Dniester.
- **Public Space Enhancement:** Efforts were directed towards the arrangement of public spaces within localities, recognizing the impact on the quality of life and the surrounding environment.

Local Initiatives

1. Waste Management Strategies:

Despite delays in the institutionalization of the Lower Dniester National Park, BIOTICA facilitated meetings in five villages (Talmaza, Tudora, Rascaieti, Purcari, Cioburciu). Together with local participants, suitable locations for garbage container installations were identified, contributing to the improved sanitation of these areas. This initiative not only addresses immediate environmental concerns but also involves the local population in waste management efforts.

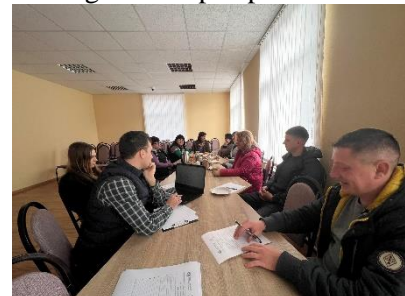


2. Update of Local Strategies:

Collaborating with local groups in Talmaza and Purcari villages, BIOTICA updated local strategies with a focus on environmental protection. The revised strategies were then submitted to Local Councils for approval, ensuring alignment with community priorities and concerns.

Working Groups in the Lower Dniester National Park: 12 working groups were established and met periodically.

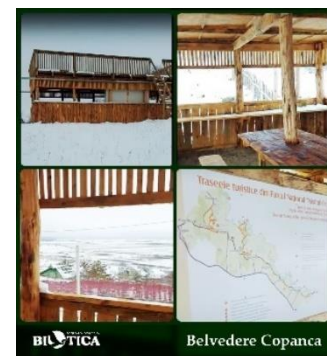
A total of 125 individuals actively participated in the working groups, representing diverse perspectives and contributing to collaborative decision-making. This sustained engagement underscores the commitment of the community to address environmental challenges. Demonstrating a commitment to gender inclusivity, 52% of the participants in the working groups were women, ensuring diverse perspectives and representation in decision-making processes. Despite challenges associated with the institutionalization process of the national park, these initiatives showcase the effectiveness of local-level involvement in tackling environmental issues and building



community resilience in the targeted areas. The ongoing commitment of citizens reflects a shared responsibility for the well-being of both the local environment and the quality of life in the community.

Contributing to the improved Living Conditions in Target Communities, the following activities had been done

- **Photovoltaic System Installation (Talmaza Mayoralty):** In partnership with Talmaza Mayoralty, a 5 kWh photovoltaic system was installed on the Mayoralty building. This sustainable energy source aims to generate electricity, saving local budget resources for addressing community issues.
- **Waste Collection and Recycling Infrastructure:** 50 containers for plastics are installed in 5 villages (Talmaza, Tudora, Rascaieti, Purcari, Cioburciu), by 10 containers per each village from the Lower Dniester National Park, where local people collect the plastic that earlier was thrown together with other wastes. Some small areas of the landfills in the same villages have been arranged, where the collected plastic from those 50 containers will be stored till the moment when it will be possible to transport them to the recycling facilities. Additionally, 10 sets for selective collection of waste were installed mostly in the educational institutions from those 5 villages in order to start education on separate waste collection with pupils. More than 470 persons actively took part in the project roundtables and cleaning events, mostly on the banks of the Dniester River and Dniester old riverbed, collecting tens of bags with garbage. This is an important step to a better environment in the Lower Dniester National Park.
- **Spring Arrangements for Community and Tourists:** Springs near Tipova and Rascaieti villages were arranged, involving local volunteers. In Rascaieti, the area around the spring was cleaned, rainwater drains were cleared, and seating facilities were installed. Additionally, a spring and pool near Glinoe village (Transnistria) were restored, serving as a water source for both local residents and wildlife.
- **Sanitary Facilities in Iagorlic Nature Reserve:** A sanitary facility with water access was constructed in Iagorlic Nature Reserve to address the lack of water and facilities for workers and tourists.
- **Visitor Points and Touristic Routes:** The visitor point in Gradinita was completed, and a new one in Copanca was built, providing facilities for local residents and visitors. Together with other previously established visitor points in the Lower Dniester National Park and other valuable tourist attractions, it is to be included in the region's tourist routes. With this measure, we are contributing to the development of ecological tourism in the region. Additionally, touristic routes were marked in Lozova village near Codrii Nature Reserve, contributing to tourism development.
- As part of supporting the Program of extension and rehabilitation of forests in Moldova, BIOTICA collaborated with Cebotari Ion II and PA "Impadurim Moldova" on a community project. The organization with the support of SIDA contributed to upgrading a seedling nursery to mechanize the production process (The equipment was bought and transmitted to Cebotari Ion II, including plow, motocultivator, tiller for motocultivator, diesel Generator, drills, motor pump,



motobur, ramp sprinkler), resulting in increased seedling numbers for planting in 2023 grown by Cebotari Ion.

Several awareness-raising activities were organized in 2023 to educate the population on environmental issues, biodiversity, and related topics. Key activities included:

- ❖ **Community Engagement:** Six events engaged 131 individuals, drawing attention to the waste problem's environmental and health impacts in Talmază, Tudora, Rascaieți, Purcari, Cioburciu, Plop-Stiubei villages.
- ❖ **Sanitation Events:** Thirteen events in Lower Dniester and Orhei National Parks raised awareness of garbage issues, involving 405 participants, including 226 women, in Talmază, Tudora, Rascaieți, Purcari, Cioburciu villages (Stefan-Voda rayon) and in Morovaia and Butuceni (Orhei rayon).
- ❖ **Excursions and Study Tours:** Excursions to protected areas (e.g. Codrii Reserve, Iagorlic Nature Reserve) and study tours promoting the planting of protective belts involved 54 participants.
- ❖ **Volunteer Environmental Inspector Training:** Four events trained 88 individuals, including 21 women, as volunteer environmental inspectors in Lower Dniester National Park (Tudora village), and Tipova Reserve (Tipova village) the left bank of the Dniester (Molovata and Cioburciu village).
- ❖ **Joint Raids and Information Events:** Two events focused on joint raids with ecological inspectors, identifying environmental violations, and informing the local population (Tudora along the Dniester bank and in Tipova reserve). Three information events in Lozova, Tipova, and Tudora provided valuable information on regional richness and sustainable tourism practices.
- ❖ **Planting Activities:** Four planting events involved 68 volunteers, including 22 women, emphasizing the importance of forests and biological resources (Cirnateni, Balabanesti, Baltata (right bank of Dniester), Iagorlic reserve (left bank of Dniester)).
- ❖ **Meetings with Government Institutions:** Two events at the Ministry of Environment and Moldosilva highlighted the Program for extension and rehabilitation of forests in Moldova and its implementation.
- ❖ **Local Development Strategy Meetings:** Two meetings in Purcari and Talmază involved 30 participants, including 14 women, emphasizing the importance of environmental protection in local development strategies.
- ❖ **International Days Celebrations:** Events on international days for environment and biodiversity highlighted the importance of Earth, water, biodiversity, and rivers.
- ❖ **Media Engagements:** Participation in over 20 TV and radio broadcasts and the creation of video materials focused on environmental issues, including biodiversity.
- ❖ **3 publications** were edited, covering topics such as the role of forest belts, environmental voluntary inspectors, and regeneration and garden soil care.

