

2023

ANNUAL

REPORT



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Introduction

In 2023, the EcoContact Non-Government Organisation (NGO) achieved successfully the objectives set out in its internal strategy, meeting honourably all of its commitments to partners, donors, community and society. We completed successfully impact projects and started new ones, with a consistent emphasis on clean and well-protected environments within sustainable, economically vibrant, and socially developed communities that uphold human rights.

The annual report contains a retrospective of the most important activities implemented by EcoContact NGO in line with the strategic areas of the organisation, namely:

-  **Environmental legislation and implementation of the Aarhus Convention;**
-  **Sustainable development and partnership building;**
-  **Organisational development.**

“
...a clean and well-protected environment within human rights are upheld.”

In a spirit of transparency and openness, EcoContact developed and strengthened its dialogue with the Government of Moldova, local public authorities, NGOs, media and the general public. This effort aims to facilitate access to environmental information and justice, advance environmental initiatives, and encourage citizen involvement in decision-making processes. In particular, considering that Moldova received the status of candidate country in June 2022 and started the EU accession negotiations, Eco Contact, as member of various working groups (7 working groups), contributed to drafting and amending the legislation in order to align it with EU environmental framework directives. Besides, EcoContact provided 14 opinions and recommendations during public consultations, as well as assisted in drafting policy documents, including the 2024-2030 Environmental Strategy.

Our work focused in particular on the education and raising awareness of environmental protection, conservation, biodiversity conservation and safeguarding water sources – particularly small rivers – preservation of natural resources, waste management and other environmental concerns.

The summary of activities also includes the implementation of five infrastructure projects:

- Expanding the water pipe in Văleni village, Cahul district;
- Procurement, installation and commissioning of on-grid photovoltaic power plants (PVP) for kindergartens in Cahul district villages – Giurgiulesti, Slobozia Mare and Manta community;
- Reconstruction of the administrative building of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve.

Additionally, **three projects** were implemented, which expanded the protection strips and helped develop public spaces:

- 1** creation of a protective forest strip and sanitation activities in Vadul lui Isac village;
- 2** creation of protective agricultural and forest strips in Andrusul de Jos village;
- 3** development and greening works on the banks of the Crihana River and adjacent areas.



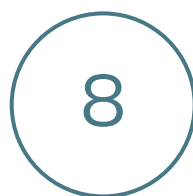
Throughout the year, approximately 50 topics were communicated to the general public, covering national and international environmental days. Additionally, 22 thematic informational and educational videos, including animations, were produced, as well as 4 communication and awareness campaigns were carried out. Eight grants were offered to environmental NGOs and four small ones to the media. EcoContact experts participated in various radio and TV shows.



informational and educational videos



communication and awareness campaigns



grants for environmental NGOs



small grants for the media



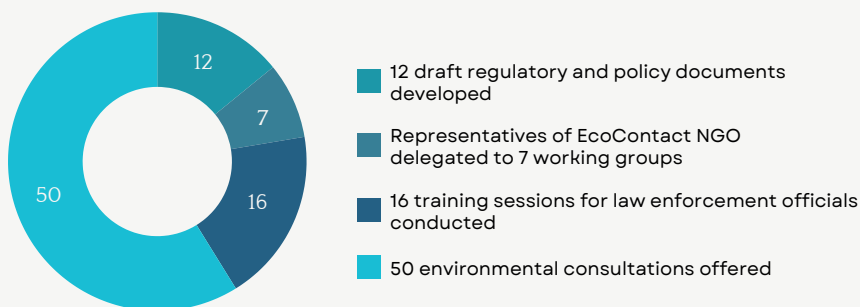
For a better understanding of the transposition of the EU regulatory and policy framework concerning environmental protection, EcoContact organised 2 thematic study visits for representatives of environmental agencies, law enforcement authorities, LPAs and civil society:

- ✓ 2 study visits - to Austria and Estonia;
- ✓ 10 international events;
- ✓ 30 thematic trainings and workshops;
- ✓ 250 coordination meetings;
- ✓ 4 practical and scientific conferences.



EcoContact achievements by **strategic areas**

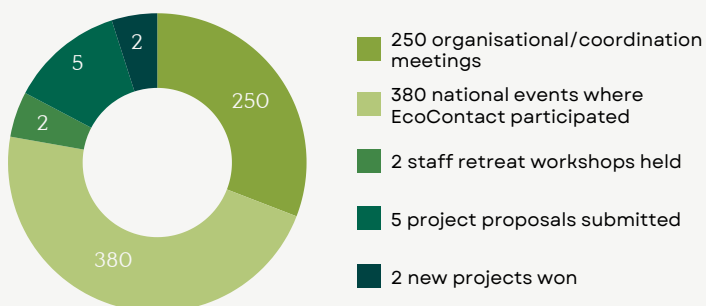
1. ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AARHUS CONVENTION



2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIP BUILDING



3. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



As usually, EcoContact organised one of the biggest events of the year for environmental NGOs – **the 2023 Environmental NGO Forum**. The Forum themed “Participate – Promote – Act for a Healthy and Protected Environment” brought together over **100 representatives from environmental civil society**, senior government officials, and development partner representatives, concluding with **the adoption of a resolution** after:



9 thematic workshops



Comprehensive water resources management



Promotion and conservation of biodiversity and of protected areas



NGO role in the transition to green economy principles



Community forest plantations by reclaiming degraded land



Management of waste and chemicals



Environmental communication and information



Climate change and reduction of development risks



Energy efficiency



Aarhus Convention and acknowledgment of human rights concerning a healthy environment



36 discussion topics

- Successes and progresses of the Naslavcea-Vasilcau Sub-Basin Committee;
- Development and implementation of the Frumoasa-Crihana Sub-Basin Management Plan;
- Progress and lessons learned by the Baltiata-Serpeni Sub-Basin Committee;
- Implementation of the Nistru River Basin Management Plan;
- Technologies for obtaining energy from river sources;
- Tourism development and implementation of energy efficiency measures in state protected natural areas;
- The role of weather modification technologies in policies concerning climate change and biodiversity;

- Forestry and ecology: Contrasting views;
- The Draft Programme for the Promotion of Green Economy in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2023–2027: objectives and actions;
- Promotion of eco–labelling in the Republic of Moldova;
- The NGO role in the transition to green economy principles;
- Aarhus Convention – a tool to ensure the right to a healthy environment;
- Implementation of the Aarhus Convention in the Republic of Moldova;
- Challenges in defending the right to a healthy environment at local level;
- A shield for human rights defenders – Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Republic of Moldova;
- Pollutant Release and Transfer Register for the implementation of the Aarhus Convention;
- Waste Management Policy Framework;
- Emergency response to environmental problems associated with refugee flow – Palanca Village Case, Stefan Voda district;
- Possibilities to collect plastic waste in rural areas;
- POP waste management issues;
- REP. System for collective management of packaging waste;
- ECO–Utilisation Programme – separate waste collection on the left bank of the Nistru River;
- Covenant of Mayors – a European initiative successfully embraced in Moldova. Examples and best practices;
- Energy efficiency projects, successes and obstacles;
- ECOlogical, ECONomic Campaign. Engaging experts;
- Impact of climate change on the frequency and intensity of climate–related disasters;
- The role of SHS in the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification;
- Adaptation and response technologies to climate change challenges in the Republic of Moldova;
- Adapting to climate change: waste management and organic agriculture projects on the left bank of the Nistru River;
- Innovative communication and information tools. Eco–Media experience;
- Participatory methods of environmental communication;
- Communicating with young people in nature protection field;
- EcoFm experience in environmental information area;
- Lifehacks for each phase of organizing a community forest plantation (excepting designated forest areas). Land identification/ species selection and design, characteristics of degraded land/ identification of planting material sources;
- Securing financing: grants, sponsors, diaspora. Aggregation of stakeholder communities. Planting, pre–planting and post–planting works;
- Care, protection, collaboration with local communities. Communication and dissemination of the results. Securing the future of the forest through community involvement and preventing its removal.



FORUM of Environmental NGOs

Participate - Promote - Act
for a healthy and protected environment

9

thematic
workshops

100

participants/
representatives

16

articles
in press

36

environmental
topics

1

resolution



01 ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AARHUS CONVENTION

Promoting a policy and regulatory framework at the national level ensures safe environmental and living conditions, which would encompass all necessary tools contributing to the organisation of human and economic activity in a way that maximises the responsibility towards the environment and society. Thus, EcoContact experts reviewed, commented and provided advice and recommendations on **12 draft regulatory and policy documents**:



- Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) on the draft Forest Code;
- Preliminary Regulatory Impact Assessment of the draft Law on Climate Action;
- Regulatory Impact Assessment of the Draft Law amending Law No 1515/1993 on Environmental Protection;
- Draft Government Decision approving the Forest Code;
- Draft Government Decision approving the Regulation on storage of waste;
- Draft Government Decision amending the Drought Management Regulation approved by Government Decision No 779/2013;
- Draft Government Decision approving the Regulation on management of mercury waste;
- Draft law amending some regulatory acts (strengthened the provisions related to the Safety Data Sheet regulated by Law No 277/2018 on chemical substances and Law No 43/2023 on fluorinated greenhouse gases);
- National Development Plan for 2023-2025 and the Environmental Protection Activity Plan for 2023;
- Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) on the draft law amending the Regulation on trade regime and regulating the use of halogenated hydrocarbons that are depleting the ozone layer, approved by Law No 852/2002;
- Draft Decision approving the Draft Land Code;
- Draft Government Decision approving the Draft Law to amend some regulatory documents (Regulation on the mechanism for energy governance and climate change, facilitating the development of energy infrastructure projects).

EcoContact NGO representatives were delegated to **7 working groups**:

- Working Group on the commitments deriving from the country's membership to International Treaties and Regional and International Environmental Organisations/Structures;
- Working Group on the Biodiversity Strategy for 2023-2030 and the Action Plan on its implementation;
- Working Group on reviewing and updating of the National Implementation Plan for the Republic of Moldova under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants;
- Working Group on reviewing and completing the Draft Forest Code;
- Working group on Green and Circular Economy;
- Working Group on Waste Management;
- Working Group on Rehabilitation of Beleu Lake in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve.

7 WORKING GROUPS



An activity initiated in 2020 to establish an eco-labelling scheme in the Republic of Moldova was successfully implemented and completed by 2023. Thus, through the European Union (EU) Environment Programme, EcoContact worked out the Government Decision and the supporting documents to promote it and developed the Ecolabel labels. In March 2023, a Government Decision on eco-labelling was approved and it is due to enter into force in April 2024. This system mirrors the EU system and adopts the EU Ecolabel Regulation 66/2010.



The Green Justice Project, funded by Sweden for the parts referring to **environmental legislation** and **implementation of the Aarhus Convention**, organised the following:

3

Joint regional training sessions for 92 representatives of territorial prosecutor's offices and environmental inspectors (22% women) regarding inter-institutional cooperation, investigation techniques and methods of environmental legislation breaches, on the site investigation procedure and drafting of procedural documents.

6

Thematic trainings for the subdivisions of the Environmental Protection Inspectorate on the implementation of the Law No. 131/2012 on State Inspection, Law No. 163/2006 on Entrepreneurial Activity, as well as specific provisions concerning environmental violations and offenses outlined in the Administrative Code and the Criminal Code (145 inspectors, with 40% of them being women).

7

Training sessions for prosecutors and judges on environmental law and the particular aspects of the investigation and examination of environmental crimes organised in partnership with the National Institute of Justice (98 individual participants - 40% of them being women (33 judges and 65 prosecutors), 54 academic hours).



Environmental consultations

During 2023, EcoContact provided over **50 free environmental consultations**. They focused on various topics such as:

- the legality of logging operations;
- the expansion of fruit growing associations;
- forest expansion on agricultural land;
- legal provisions on green space planning;
- ECHR case law on environmental protection;
- legal framework on waste management;
- creation of green offices;
- eco-labelling;
- environmental impact assessment;
- strategic environmental assessment, etc.

Similarly, assistance was offered to beneficiaries to help them prepare notifications and complaints to public environmental authorities concerning breaches of the environmental law. In this context, one applicant received legal aid for defending in court its right to use local natural resources.

50 FREE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTATIONS



02 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

Awareness raising and education campaigns

Throughout 2023, EcoContact conducted a series of communication campaigns aimed at informing, educating and raising public awareness of promoting sustainable development, environmental protection, and responsible use of natural resources. These efforts aimed to foster a responsible society, which ensures a favourable environment for both present and future generations.

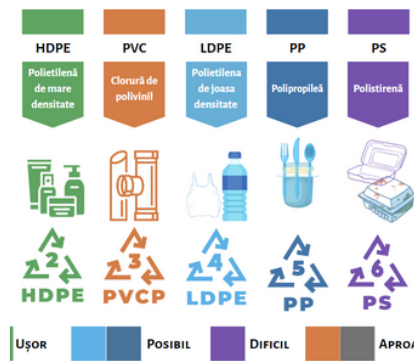
In particular, the following communication activities can be noticed:

The information and awareness campaign focused on various pressing environmental issues addressed monthly throughout the year. These included illegal logging, climate change, illegal grazing, illegal hunting, rules of conduct in protected natural areas, waste sorting promotion, surface water pollution, risks associated with using groundwater for irrigation, sustainable urban mobility, environmental impact assessment, and hazards of burning leaves and plant debris, as well as waste. **12 cartoons** and **12 informative articles** were produced including information disseminated as calendars for 2023.

$$1 \text{ Information campaign} = [12 \text{ cartoons}] + [12 \text{ articles}]$$



About 80 environmental events/topics communicated, such as: World Nature Reserves and Parks Day, World Wetlands Day, Global Recycling Day, World Mobility Day, World Energy Efficiency Day, World Wildlife Day, etc., as well as awareness-raising topics on the importance of bees, waste reduction tips, the role of birds in natural ecosystems, water saving tips, conservation and the importance of biological diversity, etc.



In order to increase information and raise awareness about the value of the protected area and its ecosystem services from the perspective of climate change impacts, the following activities were carried out:

- TOURIST GUIDE: tourist attractions in the Frumoasa-Crihana Sub-Basin and the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve
- ILLUSTRATED MAP

We also developed the brochure Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve – benefits of the protected area, conservation and environmental protection of the area



10 video clips and 12 video animations were produced on various environmental protection topics for information, education and awareness-raising purposes:

- What means the right to a healthy environment?
- What are the toxic effects of lead paint and other construction materials
- Do not burn leaves or other household waste EcoContact's recommendations on illegal logging Birds, the inspiration for humans
- Simple things you can do to protect Earth What you didn't know about bees?
- The little environmentalists
- Share of land affected by drought in the years 2000 – 2019
- Large infrastructure projects under the Strengthening climate change adaptation measures in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve
- Pilot projects as part of the project Strengthening climate change adaptation measures in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve
- The mayor of Manta commune about the photovoltaic panels installed on the roof of the kindergarten
- Mayor of Giurgiulesti village about photovoltaic panels installed on the roof of the kindergarten
- The mayor of Slobozia Mare village about the photovoltaic panels installed on the roof of the kindergarten
- 2023 in figures
- Presentation of Defenders' Guide to a Healthy Environment
- The Three Rs for Environmental Protection
- Small actions with big impacts for the climate
- Say #No to plastic
- Promoting waste sorting and reduction
- Urban mobility
- Organic waste management



Another activity in this regard was the development and dissemination of **500 sets/posters** of Lower Prut birds, which reached the schools in the LPBR area and Frumoasa Crihana Sub-Basin. At the same time, about **400 pupils** from secondary schools participated in the information and awareness-raising campaign regarding the importance of the heritage value of the area in terms of tourism, recreation, science and ecology. Thus, during February and March, within ecology and biology classes, young people from Brinza, Colibasi, Slobozia Mare, Rosu, Crihana Veche, Giurgiulesti, Andrusul de Jos, Andrusul de Sus, Valeni, Manta, Cislita Prut, Vadul lui Isac and Cahul, were introduced to rules for proper behaviour, the significance and value of the area, as well as promoting responsible attitudes and actions towards it.



The human right to a healthy environment is the theme of EcoContact's annual communication campaign promoting the Aarhus Convention and public access to information. In 2023, leaflets were created to provide basic explanations and useful information for environmental defenders. These leaflets covered topics such as the rights and responsibilities of environmental defenders, the obligations of the state towards them, and the competent authorities responsible for identifying and sanctioning violations of the environmental laws.

CE CUPRINDE DREPTUL OMULUI LA UN MEDIU SĂNĂTOS?

Dreptul omului la un mediu sănătos include mai multe drepturi specifice interdependente între ele:

- ▶ Dreptul la condiții de trai și de viață într-un mediu sănătos
- ▶ Dreptul la aer curat
- ▶ Dreptul la utilizarea resurselor naturale
- ▶ Dreptul la apă potabilă
- ▶ Dreptul de acces la informație privind starea mediului
- ▶ Dreptul de a participa la procesul de luare a deciziilor
- ▶ Dreptul de acces la justiție în probleme de mediu.

Convenția de la Aarhus, ratificată prin Hotărârea Parlamentului RM nr. 346-XIV din 07 aprilie 1999, garantează accesul publicului la informație, dreptul acestuia de a participa la procesul adoptării deciziilor și cel de a apela la justiție în probleme referitoare la mediu.

DREPTUL DE ACCES LA INFORMAȚIE DE MEDIU

Obligația autorităților statului să prezinte publicului această informație cu privire la starea mediului, și/sau copierea actelor efective ce conțin sau înclud această informație.

DREPTUL DE PARTICIPARE LA LUAREA DECIZIILOR DE MEDIU

Obligația autorităților publice de a asigura participarea publicului la procedurile de elaborare și de adoptare a deciziilor aflate în domeniul de mediu.

DREPTUL DE ACCES LA JUSTIȚIE DE MEDIU

Dreptul de a contesta deciziile în materie de mediu a autorităților publice dacă acestea au fost adoptate fără respectarea dreptului de acces la informație ecologică și dreptul de participare în procesul decizional.

Acest material informativ a fost produs în cadrul proiectului „Scut pentru apărătorii drepturilor omului - Sprijin apărătorilor drepturilor omului în Republica Moldova”, implementat de Centrul de Resurse Juridice din Moldova în parteneriat cu Asociația EcoContact și Comisia Internațională a Jurților - Institutul European, cu sprijin financiar al Uniunii Europene și cofinanțat de Suedia. Conținutul prezentat este responsabilitatea exclusivă a Asociației EcoContact și nu reflectă neapărat opinia Uniunii Europene și/sau ale Suediei.

CARE SUNT AUTORITĂȚILE COMPETENTE SĂ CONSTATE ȘI SĂ SANȚIONEZE ÎNCĂLCĂRILE LEGISLAȚIEI DE MEDIU?

Inspectoratul pentru protecția mediului (IPM) - autoritate administrativă din subordinea Ministerului Mediului, împuternicit să efectueze supravegherea și controlul de stat în domeniul protecției mediului și utilizării resurselor naturale.

Administrația Publică Locală (APL) are atribuții limitate precum: gestionarea deșeurilor, a resurselor de apă, a fondului forestier proprietate locală, folosirea și protecția subsolului, gestionarea folosirii obiectelor regimului vegetal, protecția calității aerului atmosferic, zootehnie.

Inspectoratul General al Poliției (IGP) este autoritatea administrativă din subordinea Ministerului Afacerilor Interne care asigură, în condițiile legii, implementarea politicilor statului în domeniul menținerii, asigurării și restabilirii ordinii și securității publice, protecția drepturilor și intereselor legitime ale persoanelor și comunității, prevenirea, depistarea și investigarea infracțiunilor și a contravențiilor de mediu, asistența populației și autorităților administrației publice locale.

Procuratura este instituția publică autonomă în cadrul autorității judecătorești care, în procedura penală contribuie la respectarea ordinii de drept, efectuarea justiției, apărarea drepturilor și intereselor legitime ale persoanelor și ale societății în materie de mediu.

Instanța de judecată îndeplinește justiția în scopul apărării și realizării dreptului la un mediu sănătos și liberărilor fundamentale ale cetățenilor și ale asociațiilor acestora ale întreprinderilor, instituțiilor și organizațiilor. Această instanță judecă toate cauzele privind raporturile juridice civile, de conținut administrativ, contravenționale și penale, precum și orice alte cauze pentru care legea nu stabilește o altă competență.

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CARE SUNT DREPTURILE ȘI OBLIGAȚIILE APĂRĂTORILOR DE MEDIU?

Monitorizarea încălcărilor legislației de mediu și a abuzurilor dreptului la un mediu sănătos. Asistarea solicitanților în elaborarea și depunerea plângerilor. Organizarea protestelor și exprimarea opiniei incalcată și abuzurilor dreptului la un mediu sănătos. Sprijinirea bunilor guvernării și a politicilor guvernamentale centrate pe protecția mediului. Organizarea evenimentelor de conștientizare și educație ecologică. Luarea de măsuri penale pentru a preveni potențialele încălcări ale drepturilor omului la un mediu sănătos. Luarea de măsuri pentru a curma încălcările legislației de mediu și asigurarea atragerii la răspundere a făptuitorilor.

- Să urmărească realizarea și protecția drepturilor de mediu la nivel național și internațional.
- Să inițieze asociații sau organizații neguvernamentale de mediu.
- Să se intrunescă în mod pașnic.
- Să ofere asistență juridică calificată sau orice alte consultanți întru apărarea drepturilor omului la un mediu sănătos.
- Să beneficieze de o remediu eficient în cazul încălcării drepturilor de mediu.
- Să solicite, să primească și să utilizeze resurse în scopul protejării drepturilor de mediu.
- Să exercite legal și liber activitatea de apărări ale mediului.
- Să solicite, să dețină și să primească informații referitoare la drepturile omului, inclusiv informații privind mediul înconjurător.
- Să depună plângeri/petiiți cu privire la politicile și actele normative referitoare la mediu.
- Să inițieze instituțiilor statului avize, comentarii și recomandări privind îmbunătățirea activității acestora în vederea atingerii obiectivelor de activitate și de mediu.
- Să participe la consultanți și audieri publice, proceduri pentru evaluarea conformității proiectelor de documente de mediu cu legislația națională și internațională.
- Să beneficieze de o protecție efectivă. În temeiul legislației naționale, în activitatea de depistare a încălcărilor legislației de mediu sau a omisiunilor impunitabile statului, care au rezultat încălcări ale dreptului omului la un mediu sănătos.

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The UNECE Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) was adopted at the meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention on 23 May 2003 during the Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, held in Kiev. The PRTR Information System presents systematised data on emissions of pollutants into air, water, soil, and diffuse sources, along with off-site transfers of waste and wastewater pollutants. This data is reported by industrial operators engaged in one or more relevant activities. The Project on improving the Information System “National Pollutant Release and Transfer Register in the Western Balkan Countries and Moldova” (PRTRIS) in the Republic of Moldova organised **7 training events**, where **226 stakeholders participated** both online and in person, including:

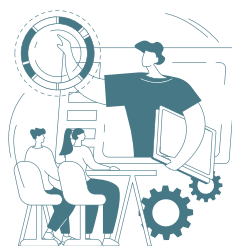
- 30 representatives of NGOs,
- 126 representatives of operators from different activity sectors: energy, waste water, industry, waste management, chemical industry, and others that are registered in the database.
- 20 representatives of environmental authorities.



training
events



stakeholders



Similarly, 2 trainings on sustainable procurement and eco-labelling were organised with the participation of more than 60 companies and procurement authorities from several state institutions. The aim of the events was to promote the inclusion of eco-label criteria in public procurement to make it more sustainable.



Facilitation/Assistance in developing plans, strategies and programmes

To support and facilitate the development of plans, strategies, and programs, the Green Justice project continued its work on refining methodologies for calculating environmental damage across various components such as air, soil, subsoil, surface and groundwater, forests, green spaces, biodiversity, animal and plant life, fisheries, and more.

Similarly, 11 local policy and planning documents from the Lower Prut Region have been supplemented with environmental protection and climate change adaptation actions according to the needs and specifics of each locality.

Another document developed in 2023 aimed to assist in drafting the 4th National Report on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. This activity was carried out as part of the project implemented by UNEP and supported financially by GEF.

This report provides a detailed analysis of Moldova's progress in combating desertification and land degradation, covering the years 2016-2019. The analysis includes a national assessment and a detailed description aligned with the objectives outlined in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Strategic Framework 2018-2030. This is integrated into the Performance Assessment and Evaluation System (PRAIS) for reporting and validation purposes. The purpose of this report is to raise awareness, provide support to relevant national authorities and development partners, and serve as a reference tool and guide in fulfilling Moldova's legal obligations to combat desertification.

Evaluation of the forest and wildland fire prevention, preparedness, and response mechanism was another evaluation document developed in 2023 as part of a project supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service. The evaluation offered an overview of the operational mechanisms currently in place in the Republic of Moldova, covering various components such as forest fire management. It also identified needs and necessary activities to enhance this area. Thus, the document provided a framework to support launching other activities and project ideas in the forestry sector.



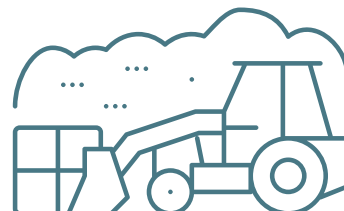
Support in the Implementation of Local Programs

The Project **Strengthening climate change adaptation measures in the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve** implemented five infrastructure projects aimed at sustainable development, including the strengthening of climate change adaptation measures. Thus, in Valeni village, Cahul District, the water supply network was expanded to serve the new part of the village. Additionally, for three kindergarten roofs were acquired and installed grid-connected photovoltaic power plants (PGS) in the villages of Manta, Slobozia Mare, and Giurgiulești. The Project also renovated the administrative building of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve in Slobozia Mare village, Cahul District. This involved constructing a shared roof, insulating the ceiling for thermal efficiency, replacing windows, refurbishing the building facade, reinforcing the walls, and laying pavement in the courtyard. Additionally, outdoor sanitary facilities were constructed, a mini sewage treatment plant was installed, and a new gate was erected.

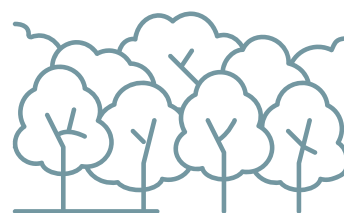


Other **three pilot projects** also contributed to environmental improvement of Lower Prut Region:

In Vadul lui Isac, Cahul District, the area surrounding the landfill was sanitized and enclosed with a barbed wire fence, then a 1 ha forest strip was planted and a video monitoring system was installed.



In Andrusul de Jos village several agroforestry protection strips have been created. About 2400 seedlings (trees and shrubs) were planted across 6 sectors spanning 200 acres using silvicultural technologies and adhering to ecological and silvicultural standards.



Works to enhance and green the banks of the Crihana River and its surrounding area were carried out in Crihana Veche village, Cahul district. The works included removing concrete slabs, constructing and installing metal decking, setting up piers and lighting fixtures, and landscaping the riverbanks.



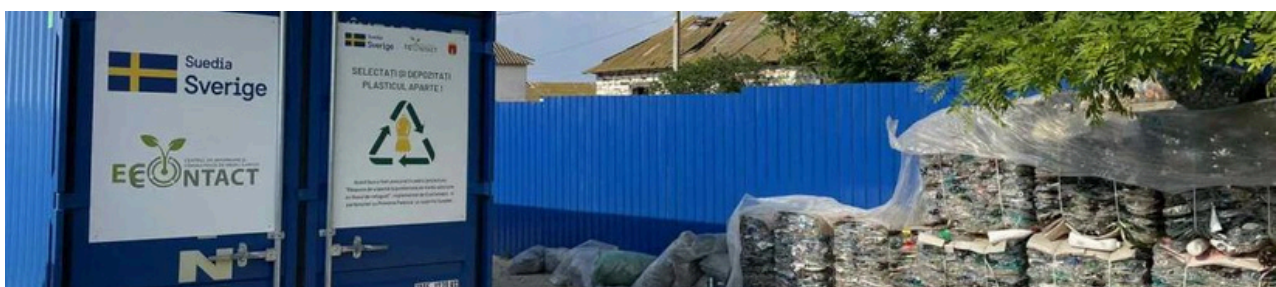
Support activities for implementation of local projects were also undertaken under the project “Green justice for a protected environment and sustainable communities in the Republic of Moldova”.

7 7 local environmental platforms were created in Balti Municipality, Cahul districts, Causeni, Falestesti, Hincesti, Stefan Voda and Ialoveni. The local environmental platforms aim to strengthen the capacities of the different stakeholders in implementing the environmental law and responding to environmental crimes in target districts.

8 Eight small grants were provided through the Active Citizens for a Healthy Environment and Green Justice Programme to support non-governmental organisations in seven specific districts of the Republic of Moldova. These grants aimed to help address local environmental issues, promoting, supporting and facilitating public participation in decision-making, and develop local regulations focusing on environmental issues.

4 Four small grants were provided under the Community Journalism for a Healthy Environment and Green Justice Programme. The goal of the Media SGP is to support journalistic investigations in the project’s seven target districts. These investigations aim to spotlight environmental issues in the region, including the clarification, investigation, and examination of environmental violations, and to contribute to the engagement of local communities in monitoring and resolving these issues.

EcoContact, together with the entire society, participated in efforts to support Ukrainian refugees in the Republic of Moldova. Thus, in addition to providing humanitarian aid, the project “Emergency response to the environmental challenges stemming from the refugees flows” established a platform in Palanca village for collecting, sorting, and compacting plastic waste. In 2023, more than one ton of plastic waste was manually sorted, compacted into bales, and sent for recycling, which had been accumulated from border towns as a result of the humanitarian response to the refugees flows from Ukraine in early 2022. Thus, for the first time in the Lower Nistru National Park region, an efficient plastic waste management mechanism was put in place through separate collection, compacting, and transportation to an authorised recycling facility. This achievement was made possible thanks to the effective cooperation of Palanca Municipality and EcoContact, financially supported by Sweden.



Research and methodology development

With the approval of the Government Decision establishing the Ecolabel mechanism in the Republic of Moldova, a study was launched to assess the Ecolabel scheme and establish the necessary implementation steps, institutions involved, types of labelling, and categories of products and services, etc.

Another activity initiated in 2023 under the EU Environment Programme was “Strengthening the Emerald Network in the Republic of Moldova”. To develop a Roadmap for Strengthening the Emerald Network, a research study was conducted to assess the current situation and the existing legislative, institutional, management and conservation gaps. This study aimed to formulate specific actions to enhance the Emerald Network and improve the sufficiency index.

Publications and studies

- Guide: Ecolabelling scheme in the Republic of Moldova
- Tourist guide: tourist attractions in the Frumoasa-Crihana Sub-Basin and the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve
- Illustrated tourist map: The Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve
- Brochure: Lower Prut Reserve
- Guide: Strategic Environmental Litigation
- Posters: Birds of The Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve
- Evaluation of fire prevention, preparedness and response mechanism in the Republic of Moldova – focusing on forest and vegetation fires
- Introduction of the EU Single Market Initiative for Green Products (study in cooperation with CIVITA Armenia)
- National Report No IV “Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in the Republic of Moldova”

Partnership Building

In 2023, there was a significant emphasis on strengthening partnerships and communication with other NGOs, actively participating in various national as well as international platforms. Among the most important events of this kind are:

- The Eighth Meeting of the Working Group on the Access to Information under the Aarhus Convention, 9–10 November 2023, Geneva, Switzerland.
- Aarhus Centres Annual Meeting, 2023 edition, 17–18 October 2023, Dushanbe, Tajikistan.
- The Tenth Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention). 27–28 November 2023, Geneva, Switzerland.

- International conference: Improving climate resilience: Linking the European Green Deal with the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, 19 May 2023, Podgorica, Montenegro.
- The Fifteenth meeting of the Working Group on Access to Justice under the Aarhus Convention, 4-5 April 2023, Geneva, Switzerland.
- Regional Conference on Improving the Rule of Law and Access to Justice for All. 1-2 December, 2023, Tbilisi, Georgia.
- Annual Black Sea Common Maritime Agenda Stakeholder Conference. 22-23 November 2023, Bucharest, Romania.
- Meeting of experts on environment, climate resilience and security in the Eastern Partnership Region.
- National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.
- 15th Meeting of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. 14-16 November 2023, Brussels, Belgium.

Two study visits were also carried out to strengthen the partnership and exchange experience.

One of these visits was an experience exchange and best practice on the transposition of environmental crime prevention and investigation issues in Estonia, which took place in September 2023.

Another study visit focused on strengthening sustainable management of protected areas and took place in Austria in the "Neusiedler See-Seewinkel National Park" and "Donau-Auen National Park", with the participation of representatives of state authorities, local public authorities of the Lower Prut Biosphere Reserve, Frumoasa-Crihana Sub-Basin. The aim of the visit was to gain knowledge and skills on the efficient and correct management of protected areas focusing on conservation.



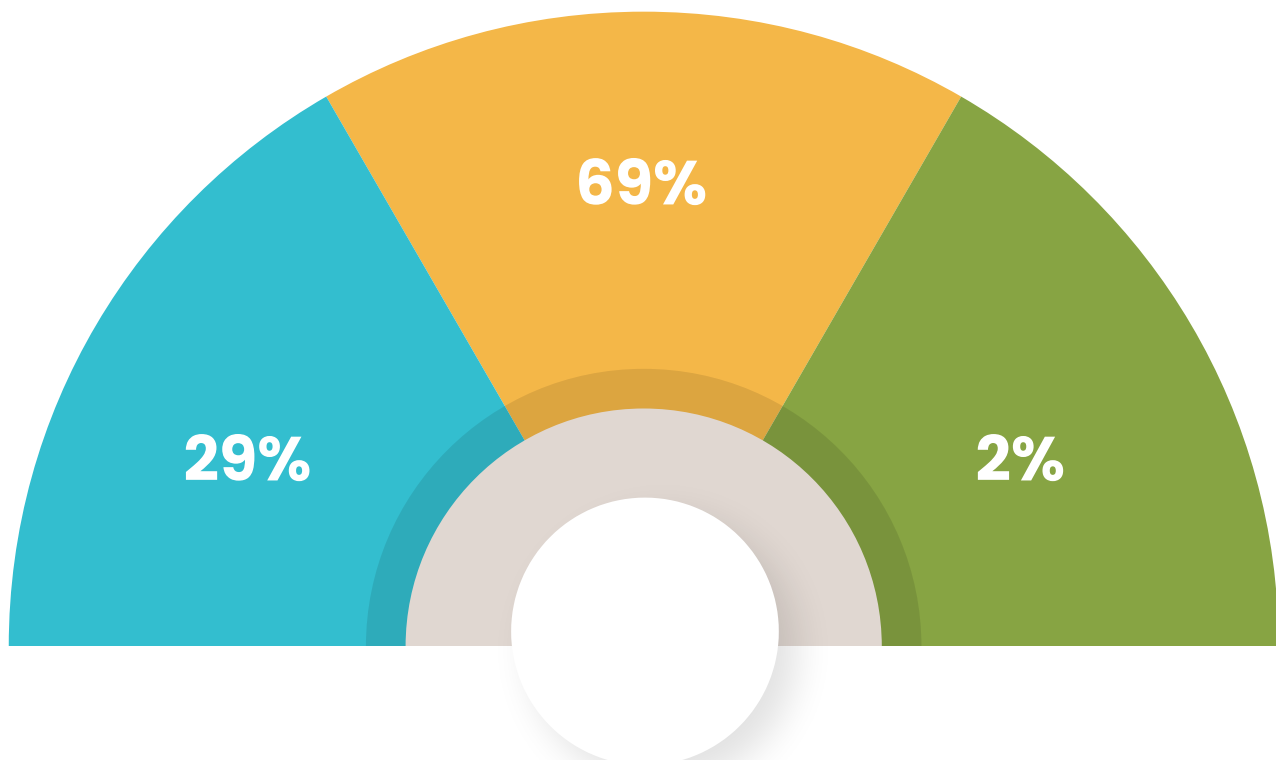
03 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The efficiency, development and optimisation of organisational management stand as key priorities and strategic directions for EcoContact, to which its particular efforts and attention are devoted. In this sense, in 2023, two key courses were implemented, aiming at **consolidating and optimising the human resources** at EcoContact. The first initiative was an organisational meeting, focused on assessing and improving strategic issues, with a particular emphasis on **communication skills development**. This session resulted in a better alignment of the team with organisational objectives and a significant improvement in the way communication is managed in the organisation.



A **Basic first aid course** according to the European certification, offered by the Romanian Red Cross, was also organised. This initiative is designed to build the staff capacity in providing first aid in emergency situations. Participants completed intensive training modules, gaining essential knowledge and practical skills that will help increase safety in the organisation.

Financial report 2023



01 STRATEGIC AREA
Environmental legislation and implementation of the Aarhus Convention

02 STRATEGIC AREA
Sustainable development and partnership building

03 STRATEGIC AREA
Organisational development

Many thanks to development partners

Additionally, in 2023, EcoContact managed to implement successfully the pre-established objectives and projects, largely due to the support of development partners who share the same vision for environmental protection and access to environmental justice.

In this context, we express our thanks and gratitude to:

Sweden, Austrian Development Agency, Stockholm Environment Institute, U.S. Forest Service (U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service), European Union, Participatio Environmental Policy Advisory Ltd, EU4Environment Programme, World Bank, UNEP, Global Environment Facility, and all national and local partners thanks to whom we have achieved great things.

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EU4Environment
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Action implemented by:



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**Umwelt
Bundesamt**

transfer



Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Nature Conservation,
Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection

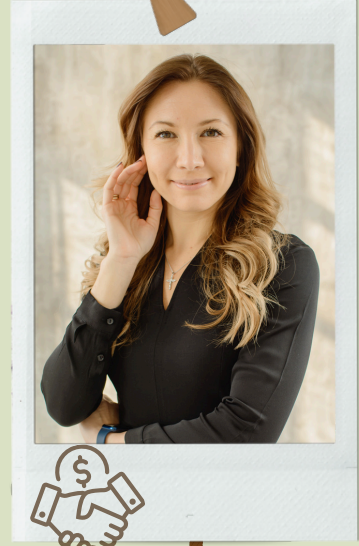


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Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.

(Hellen Keller)



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