



WWF-CEE and The Coca-Cola Foundation announce the extension of their partnership and continue to work together to increase climate resilience and watershed health in the Danube basin

19th March 2024 - WWF Central and Eastern Europe (WWF-CEE) and The Coca-Cola Foundation are extending their **Living Danube Partnership** to help increase climate and water resilience along the Danube basin for a further three years. The Coca-Cola Foundation is supporting the programme with 1.53 million USD.

The Danube River Basin is Europe's second largest river basin, the most international river basin in the world and a significant lifeline for Europe. On its 2,800 km journey from the Black Forest to the Black Sea, the river passes through ten countries and drains all or part of nineteen countries. However, over the past 150 years more than 80% of wetlands have been lost due to climate change pressure and dikes, dams, and bank fixation.

The pressing challenges caused by nature degradation, biodiversity loss and the freshwater crisis are intrinsically linked, and addressing them is critical to mitigating the worst effects of climate change. Collective action by industry, governments and conservationists are essential to delivering long-term positive impacts for nature restoration and the protection of essential ecosystems, and through that, building greater resilience to climate- and water-related risks.

Since the initiation of the programme in 2014, the Living Danube Partnership has supported more than nine projects across six countries in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and Romania. The partnership will continue to focus on restoring essential wetlands, floodplains and tributaries along the Danube River, building on the success and impact delivered through the cross-sectoral [programme over the past ten years](#). It will continue to build resilience for communities vulnerable to water-related climate risks in urban and rural areas, while improving watershed health in the Danube basin and delivering benefits for communities, agriculture and nature through collective action.

"Intense floods, droughts, and heatwaves are already devastating parts of Europe, at an immense cost to communities, business and nature. We need to work hand in hand with nature, not against it, to overcome these challenges. Our focus must extend beyond conservation to the restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity, including rivers and wetlands," says **Andreas Beckmann, WWF-CEE CEO**. "To achieve meaningful change at scale, collective action is essential. Our shared vision for a Living Danube, where both people and nature thrive, has once again united us with The Coca-Cola Foundation and now with Coca-Cola–Europe and Coca-Cola HBC to continue building resilience for

communities vulnerable to water-related climate risks, while improving watershed health in the Danube basin."

"The Coca-Cola Foundation wants to achieve measurable and lasting impact through collective action, both in nature and within our communities around the world," says **Saadia Madsbjerg, President of The Coca-Cola Foundation and VP Community Affairs for The Coca-Cola Company**. "The Foundation's support for the renewal of the Living Danube Partnership with WWF-CEE is a positive step forward on our joint vision to continue building climate resilience in the Danube basin."

The partnership extension will focus on projects across six countries, namely Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Slovakia, and Czechia, building on the water resilience work done in many of these countries during the first phase of the partnership. In the extension of the partnership, we are expanding the scope of the programme from nature restoration towards community resilience that will include interventions in agriculture and urban areas, whereas in prior years many projects were in remote and rural areas. New project work will include sites in Hungary (upper Tisza floodplain) and Czech Republic (Krušné Mountains).

Additionally, Coca-Cola Europe and Coca-Cola HBC will support the Living Danube Partnership to demonstrate and promote good water stewardship and explore additional opportunities for collective action.

According to WWF-CEE, by 2021 when the first phase of the Living Danube Partnership was concluded, approximately 5,462 hectares of rural wetlands, rivers and floodplains were restored with the support of The Coca-Cola Foundation, EU and state funds, creating the opportunity to replenish approximately 13.45 million m³ of water annually. Partnerships like these encourage the global community to improve water management by demonstrating and promoting good water stewardship.

About WWF

WWF is one of the world's largest independent conservation organisations, with over 5 million supporters and a global network active in more than 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption. As a member of the WWF global network, WWF-CEE exists to promote WWF's mission across seven countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Member organisations include WWF-Bulgaria, WWF-Hungary, WWF-Romania, WWF-Slovakia, WWF-Ukraine, and WWF in Czechia. wwfcee.org

About The Coca-Cola Foundation

The Coca-Cola Foundation's mission is to make a difference in communities around the world where The Coca-Cola Company operates and where our employees live and work. We support transformative ideas and institutions that address complex global challenges and that leave a measurable and lasting impact. Our giving is focused on sustainable access to safe water, climate resilience and disaster risk

preparedness and response, circular economy, economic empowerment, and causes impacting our hometown community. Since its inception in 1984, The Coca-Cola Foundation has awarded grants of over \$1.5 billion in service of its mandate to strengthen communities across the world.

For more information please contact Coca-Cola Europe: media.europe@coca-cola.com or WWF Central and Eastern Europe: Mihaela Popova, Regional Communications Manager, WWF-CEE, mpopova@wwfcee.org

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