



Free Flowing Danube?

Living Danube Partnership: working together
to increase resilience

Eva Hernández

Living European Rivers
Initiative Coordinator
WWF



Free Flowing Rivers

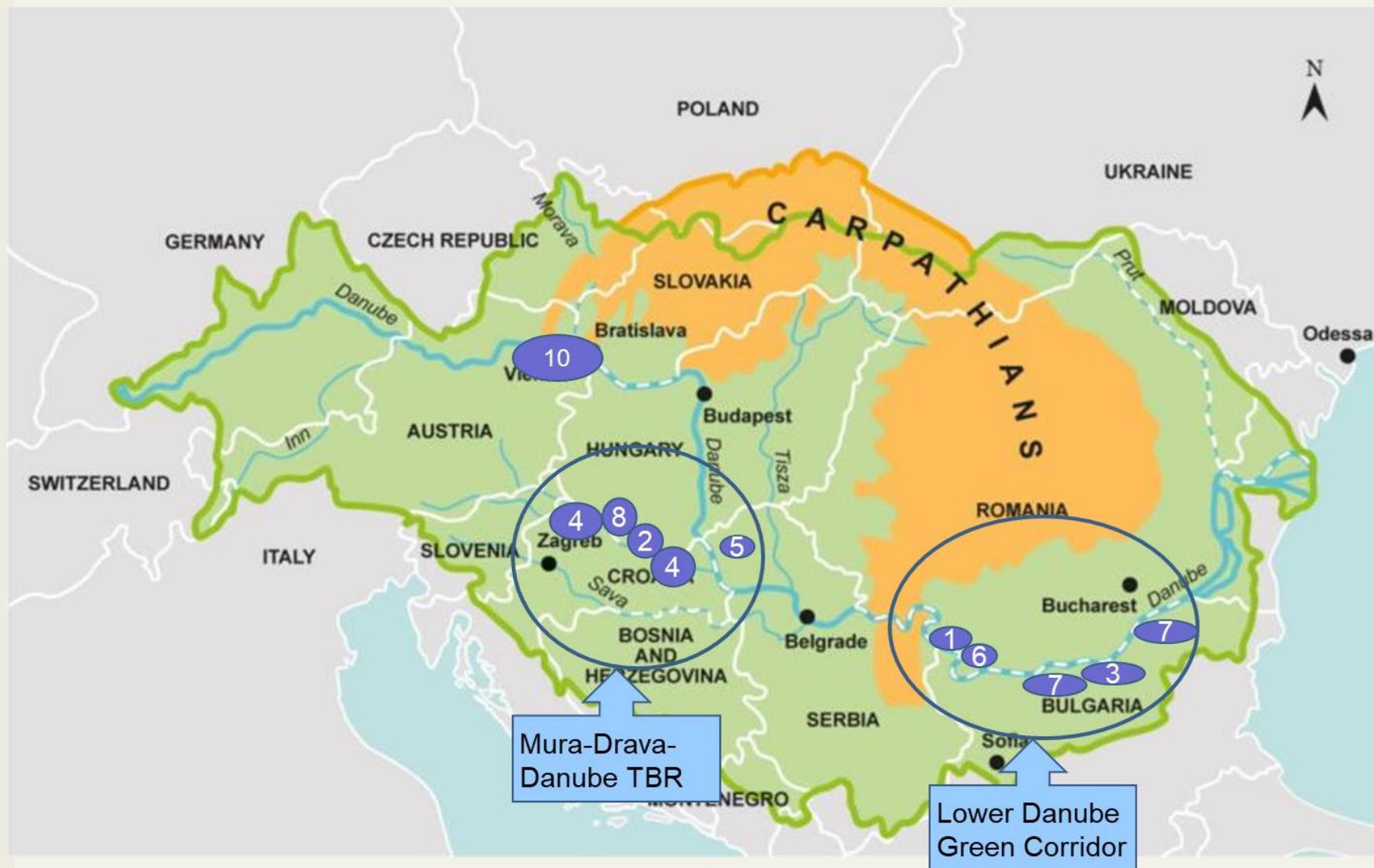
- Largely unaffected by human-made changes to its flow and connectivity
- Water, silt, and other natural materials can move along unobstructed
- Animals, such as river dolphins and migratory fish, can swim up and down stream at will
- The river itself can swell and shrink naturally, flow at an organic volume and rate, and replenish groundwater sources

*Out of
177 big rivers
in the World*

*Only
1/3 flow
freely*

Learn more at: <https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/free-flowing-rivers>

The Danube basin





Governance framework

International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)

.14 countries (out of the 19 in the basin)

.Adaptation Strategy

.RBMP

European Union

- Water Framework Directive, RBMP and FRMP
 - Birds and Habitats Directives
 - European Funds
-



The Living Danube Partnership

WWF- Coca-Cola - ICPDR

Goals (2014-2020)

Conserve and restore river sections/ wetlands in selected areas on the Danube basin:

Improve **ecology** and bring **socio-economic** benefits on pilots

2. Promote wise use of freshwater resources in the Danube basin:

Communication > local communities, general public, decision makers

Create a **regional movement/leverage** > to make a measurable impact, and support EU, regional and national commitments

Budget and financing

➤ Coca-Cola: 3,73 million EUR

➤ Directly leveraged over 7.65 million EUR by EU LIFE Nature and other donors (local co-funding)



Framework and KPIs for 2020

7 years (2014 -2020)

Multi-country programme (6 countries and regional level)

Multisectoral cooperation:

- ICPDR;
- The Coca-Cola Company, Foundation and Hellenic;
- WWF;
- nature conservation and water management authorities;
- Municipalities, land owners and other local stakeholders

9 conservation projects + communication

Flexibility: Already defined projects + preparation of future projects

Combination of water/conservation, stakeholder involvement, socio-economic and communication benefits

12 Mio m³

5300 ha

2100 local stakeholders

120 000 people directly involved

5 million+ people reached



EbA restoration measures

Going green, living with some grey

- .Floodplain and side branches reconnection, inlet channels
- .Restore river longitudinal connectivity (obstacles elimination/dam removal, fish passages)
- .Restore water levels (bottom weir)
- .Excavation of topsoil
- .Expansion and deepening the existing water supply channel
- .Riverbed incision mitigation (root causes analysis, increase water retention capacity of floodplain forest; side-arm restoration; revise existing river regulation structures)
- .Dyke reinforcement (exceptional cases)
- .Raise groundwater table to former levels by building weirs





Other actions contributing to the partnership

Management

Establish Mura-Drava-Danube Trans-boundary Biosphere Reserve

Improve management of sluices;

Sustainable angling

Foster WFD and FD implementation (RBMP, FRMP)

Awareness raising



for a living planet®

Next steps

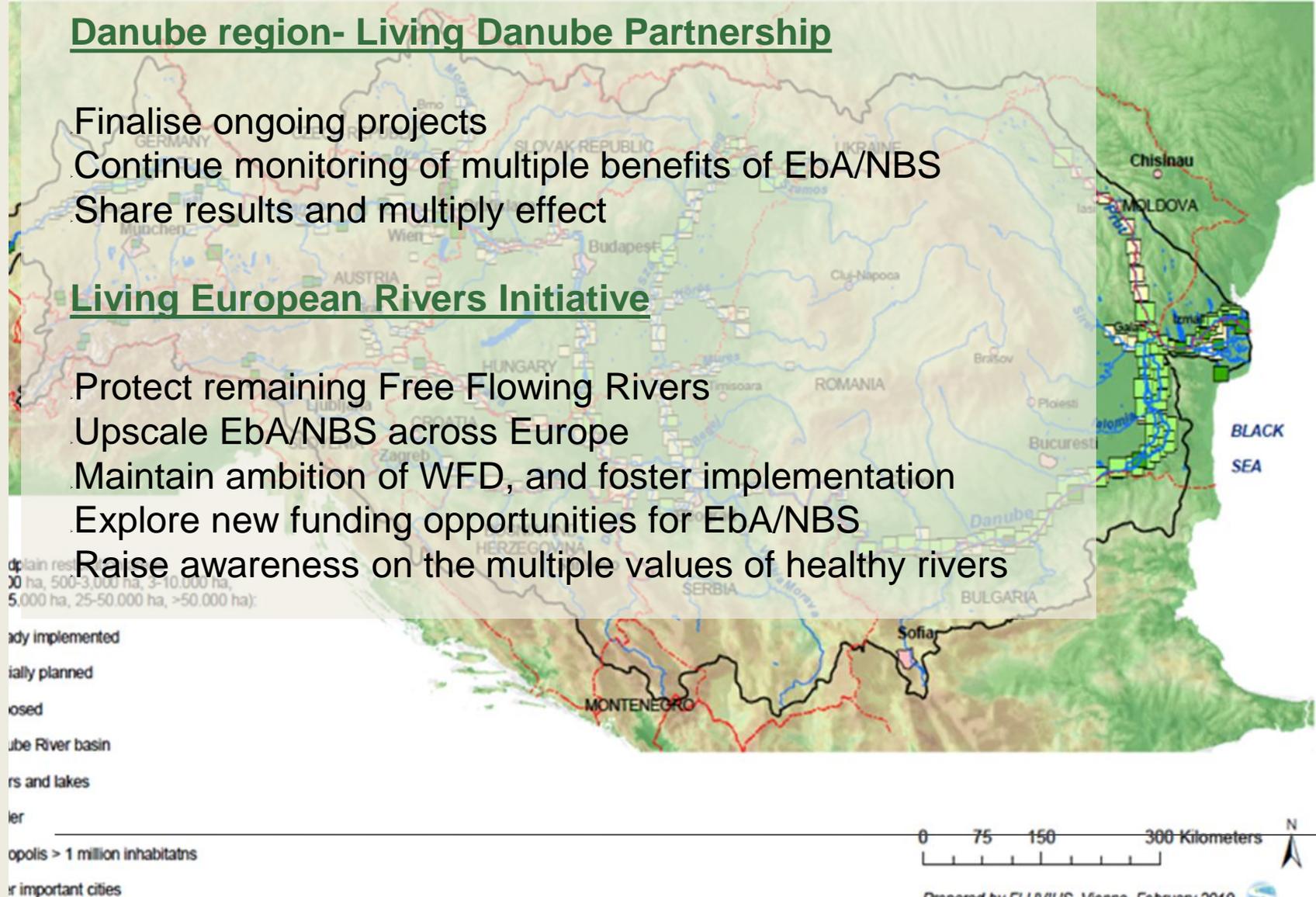
Floodplain restoration areas (implemented, planned, proposed) along the Danube and major tributaries

Danube region- Living Danube Partnership

- Finalise ongoing projects
- Continue monitoring of multiple benefits of EbA/NBS
- Share results and multiply effect

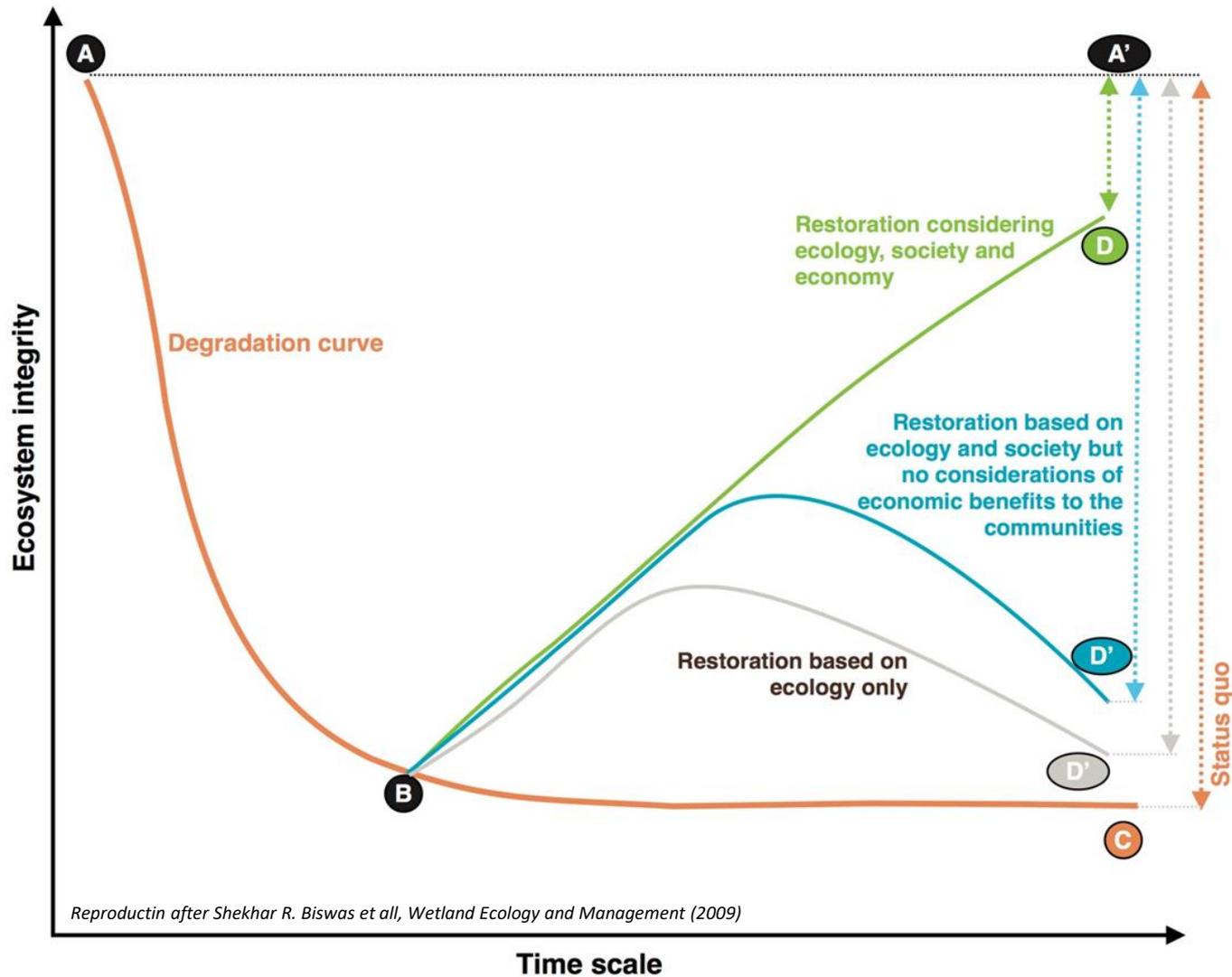
Living European Rivers Initiative

- Protect remaining Free Flowing Rivers
- Upscale EbA/NBS across Europe
- Maintain ambition of WFD, and foster implementation
- Explore new funding opportunities for EbA/NBS
- Raise awareness on the multiple values of healthy rivers





Lessons learnt: Stakeholders are key for restorations initiatives



The evolution of the ecosystem degradation curve considering ecology, society and economy under different scenarios for restoration.

Reproductin after Shekhar R. Biswas et all, Wetland Ecology and Management (2009)

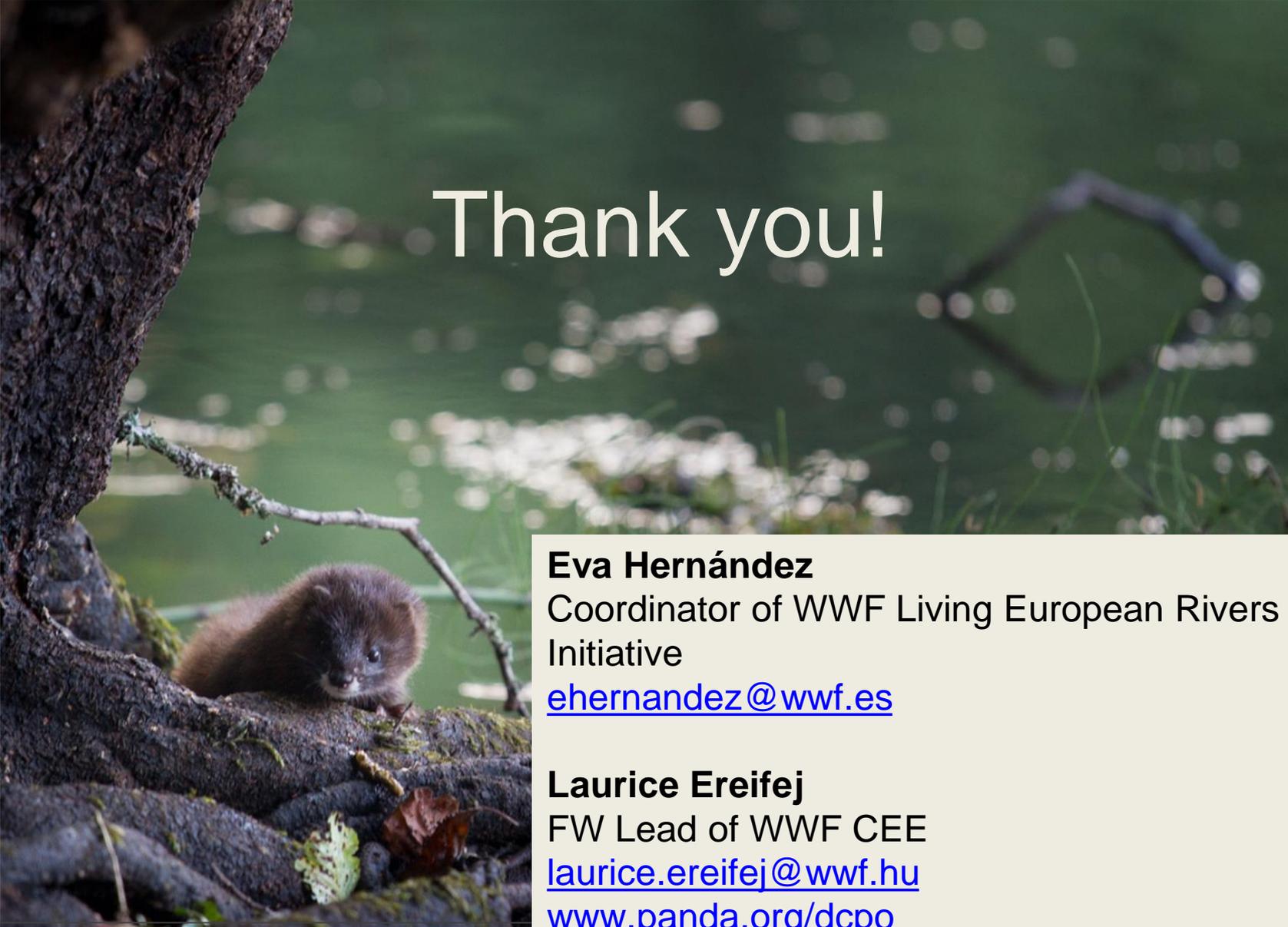


Lesson learnt

- Mindsets are the biggest challenge
- Invest in preparatory phase
- Expect the unexpected
- Keep flexible
- Involve stakeholders
- Distribute responsibilities according to capacities
- Search for seed-funding is key
- Projects stimulate projects
- Improve governance, ensure coordination (WFD)
- Measure
- Think broad, aim at multiple benefits
- The best measure is protection

Preserving is
cheaper than
restoring

Coherence,
governance,
engagement

A young brown bear cub is perched on a mossy tree branch, looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred river with sunlight reflecting on the water.

Thank you!

Eva Hernández

Coordinator of WWF Living European Rivers Initiative

ehernandez@wwf.es

Laurice Ereifej

FW Lead of WWF CEE

laurice.ereifej@wwf.hu

www.panda.org/dcpo