



FOREWORD

BY GABRIEL PAUN



Greetings, esteemed friends,

On behalf of nature and the Agent Green team, I invite you to discover our accomplishments in 2023. Each individual who dedicates time to nature enriches our spirit and renews our faith. Often, it requires minimal time to effect significant positive change. The upcoming year is one in which participation shifts from the realm of "it would be nice" to "it is essential."

Each individual is significant and plays a role in the grand order of the Universe. The rationale that should define humanity must become evident, as we find ourselves in the peculiar situation of being the only species on the planet that destroys its own habitat while residing within it. You will soon discover how 2023 has impacted Romania's natural environment. Until next year, I encourage you to acknowledge and celebrate your contributions to nature and future generations, regardless of their scale. Every gesture, whether significant or modest, reflects our shared commitment to solidarity.

There is an urgent need for widespread community involvement as the environment continues to suffer. The land, water, and air are increasingly subjected to pollution at an alarming pace. We therefore invite you to engage with us across all our channels to follow and support our initiatives.

Thank you, on behalf of nature.

Gabriel Păun, President









2023

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VISION AND MISSION

Agent Green has consistently dedicated itself to the service of life and nature. We possess the capability to achieve this, as it is in our best interest and ultimately our destination. Our biodiversity remains relatively abundant compared to many European nations. As humans, we are integral to nature, yet we confront a daunting future due to climate change. Humanity has struggled to address these challenges, and now we must adapt. Our learning will occur either through education or through the calamities that may befall us. Agent Green envisions a path of learning through education and action, and the organization's mission has evolved to collaboratively mitigate the severity of the future.



2023

SUMMARY

Justice remained, in 2023, one of the few strategies through which we could effect change. Otherwise, corruption, organized crime, and the apathy of the average individual have irrevocably consumed new segments of nature. Investigations

LAWSUITS

Campaigns and initiatives

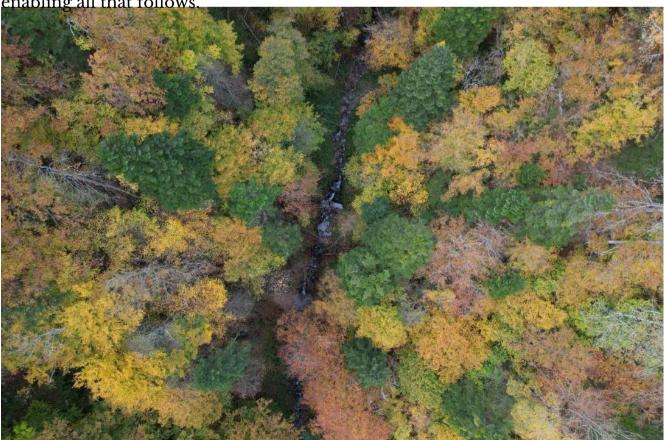


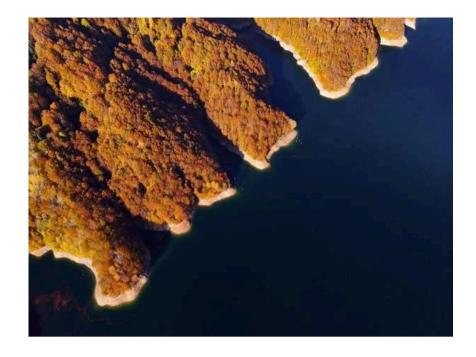
We persisted in employing the established tactics of Agent Green: investigations, disclosures, advocacy, scientific research, and education. Not only did the forest require our assistance, but also its inhabitants, such as the bear, who once again needed our support, as he is unjustly accused each season for his own fur and skull, which are sought after by hunters.

In 2023, I produced numerous reports and documentaries focused on nature, particularly on an international scale. Additionally, we maintained our collaboration with European institutions to preserve Romania's natural environment.



Romania consistently captivates with its stunning landscapes and the extraordinary circumstances it presents, often without recourse, and which are certainly not encountered at every turn. We aspire for it to increasingly astonish with its allure, and for that, we encourage you to continue reading. We also extend our gratitude for being a part of the Agent Green community and for enabling all that follows.





Regrettably, as the year drew to a close, numerous adverse events occurred in nature. I nearly lost all that I had achieved.

However, the ambitious plans for 2024 inspire us for another year dedicated to the preservation of nature. We invite you to explore the narrative that you, as a member of the Agent Green community, help to bring to life.









DORNA CANDRENILOR

Partea I-a - Metoda de furt



Partea a II-a - Mărturia inginerului silvic Victor Pavel



A soap opera-like scenario unfolded in the northern region of the country, characterized by deforestation and substantial financial gain, resulting in shattered lives and the usurpation of rights, as is often the case in this avaricious industry.

The investigation titled "Robbery in Dorna Candrenilor, Suceava County" reveals a significant theft of timber facilitated by the deliberate misrepresentation of tree dimensions (both diameter and height). The Suceava Forest Guard has corroborated the method of theft. A forestry engineer implicated in the scheme has made startling allegations against his superiors, claiming they have wrongfully implicated him in actions he did not commit. The university professor of the accused engineer has come to his defense. Additionally, the narrative encompasses corrupt police officers who have received substantial prison sentences.

It is a comprehensive, three-part investigation that can be found on the website for those seeking detailed information about this story.

IKEA



IKEA appears to be an inexhaustible contributor to the destruction of centuries-old forests in Romania and across Europe, converting them into furniture designed for rapid consumption, akin to fast food. Recent reports and investigations indicate that IKEA is far from adopting sustainable practices or acknowledging the extent of the devastation it is causing. Consequently, IKEA has emerged as a new, persistent challenge for Agent Green. Just as we succeeded in compelling the Austrians to reconsider their actions, we will prevail against the Swedes, provided we have your support.









Ikea stands as the largest private owner of forests in Romania. Their management practices are severely lacking, and the company fails to fulfill its commitments, often doing the contrary. **IKEA** epitomizes greenwashing and little else. The investigative report we been have developing since last year is nearing completion and is for scheduled publication in April 2024.



This is the condition of the forests acquired by IKEA in Romania. Significant deforestation occurs in contravention of national and European legislation.

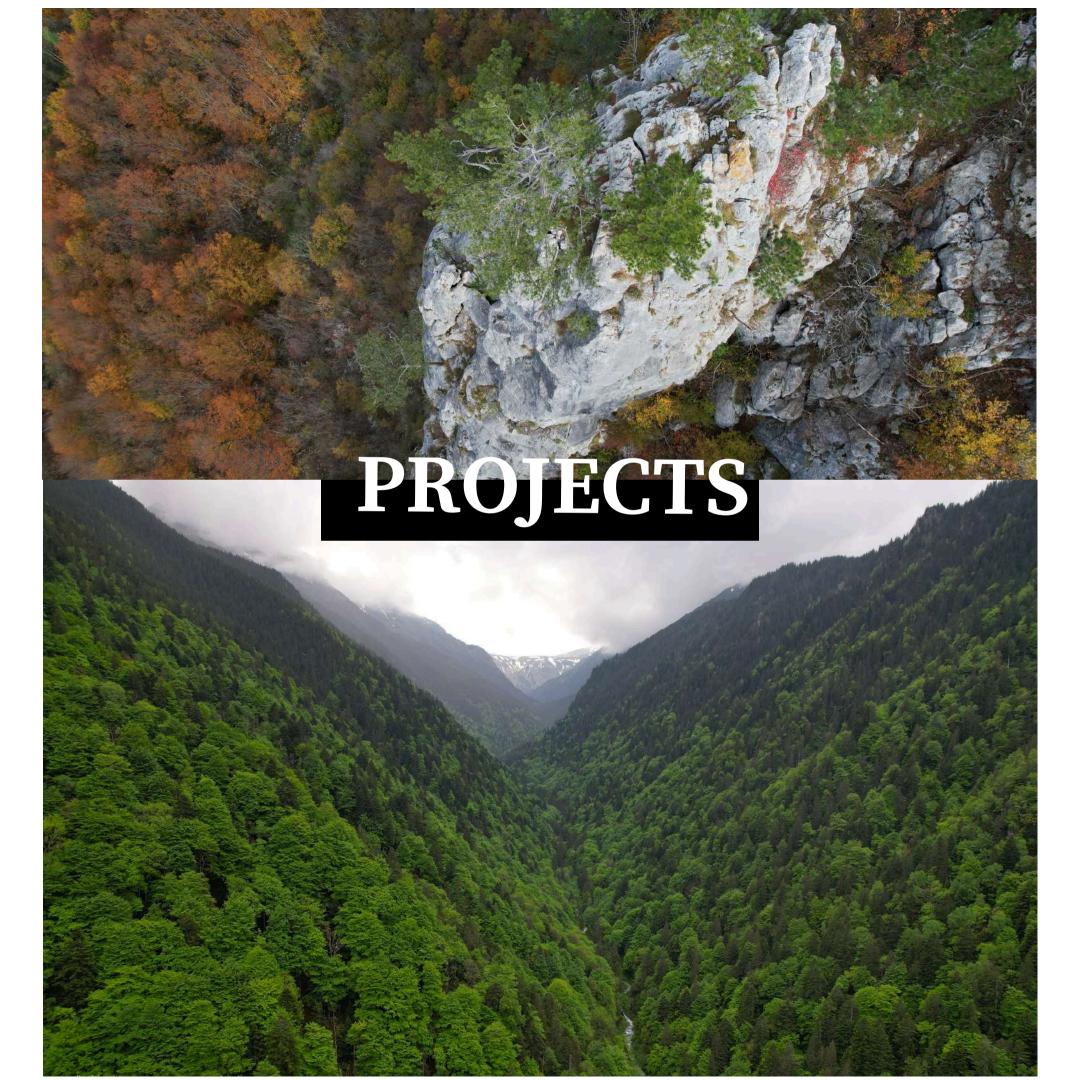


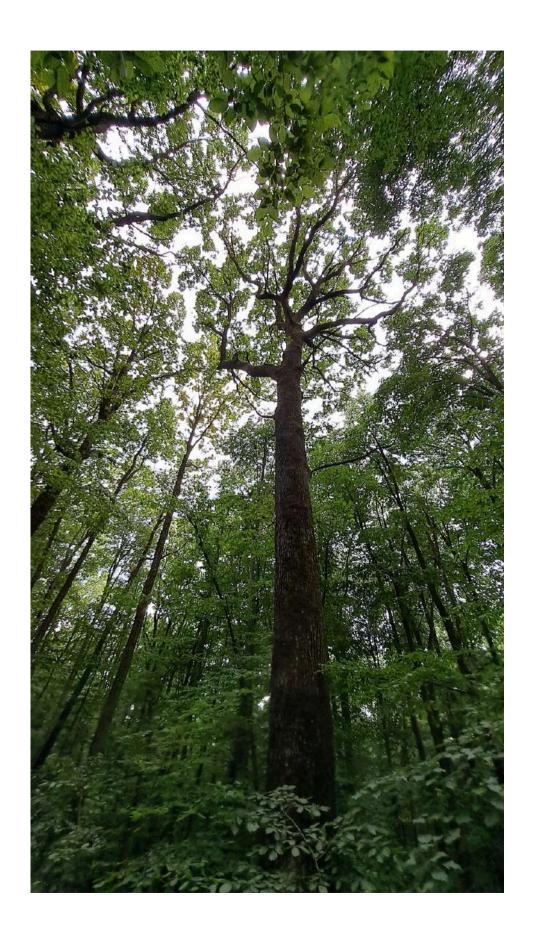
ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE NERA KEYS



We uncovered unauthorized constructions at the Călugăra Orthodox Monastery in Valea Ciclovai, situated within a highly protected area of Caraș-Severin County. These activities are being conducted without the necessary permits and environmental approvals in the Valea Ciclovei – Ilidia Nature Reserve, part of the Cheile Nerei-Beușnița National Park, which coincides with Natura 2000 sites of European significance (Site of Community Importance and Bird and Fauna Protection Site Nerei-Beușnița). The interventions have had a substantial impact on the stream and the ancient forests within the state-owned forest fund, classified under Tl category, indicating strict protection.







NATURE'S LAWYER

In 2023, we continued the previously initiated processes concerning illegal forest management practices implemented without strategic environmental assessments and insufficient evaluations.

We successfully appealed cases that were initially lost, including the Topana Forest case, in which the court mandated a retrial.

We successfully secured a significant appeal concerning the construction authorization for the Portile de Fier – Reşita Overhead Electric Line, where we had been adjudicated for several years solely on the appeal process in court involving Romsilva and Transelectrica. Ultimately, the Bucharest Court of Appeal upheld the appeal and referred the case for resolution on its merits.

We persisted in winning disputes concerning access to public interest information with the Ministry of the Environment, Waters and Forests, which continues to withhold complete communication of the forestry arrangements related to the Bucegi Park, despite multiple court rulings and the infringement procedure initiated on this matter by the European Commission.

The Ministry declines to disclose the segment of forest management pertaining to the forest's description, the approved treatments, their locations, and the associated maps. This lack of transparency hinders any comprehension of how the management will impact the forest, as well as the species and habitats involved. Likewise, the private forestry enclaves resist communication, despite having lost legal battles against them, most recently concerning the Codrii verzi





How shall we commence 2024?

We contributed to the methodology for designating 10% of Romania's territory for strict protection, a process that Agent Green has been engaged in since the European Commission published the new biodiversity strategy in May 2020.

We have initiated a series of litigations aimed at annulling decisions related to management plans, including those for Retezat National Park and forestry projects such as the Văliug Forest Ring Road, which were adopted unlawfully and jeopardize the integrity of certain forests and Natura 2000 Sites. Several regions in Retezat, including the stunning Râu-Şes Valley, are now under strict protection due to the efforts of Agent Green.



We have launched a petition to the European Parliament advocating for the protection of the brown bear species, which is endangered by Romanian legislation that contravenes the Habitats Directive. Additionally, we are preparing a national court action to address this issue.

One of the most significant cases involves the unlawful construction of a ski lift and ski slope in Bucegi Natural Park by the Mayor of Sinaia, within the sustainable management zone of the Park, where any constructions unrelated to the management of protected areas are strictly prohibited. As a result, a magnificent habitat of rhododendrons, a European protected species of exceptional beauty, was devastated.

In the future, we will persist with the initiated litigations and concentrate on the development and forest management within protected areas. We will maintain our efforts to secure access to forestry facilities and assess the management plans for compliance with IUCN standards and the Habitats Directive.



In numerous instances of unlawful activities leading to the degradation of forests, species, and habitats, I have submitted criminal complaints that remain unresolved by the designated prosecutors. This includes the circumstances surrounding Bucegi National Park, the falsified layout of OS Boisoara Enterprise SRL in the Făgăraș Mountains, and the illegal commissioning of the microhydropower plant on the Taia River in Hunedoara County, for which an infringement procedure is also underway against Romania.



In the Taia case, we contested in court the environmental authorization that was issued unlawfully, lacking an environmental assessment and contravening the judicial authority of a prior ruling. The court, presided over by a magistrate who was a former employee of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' secret services, dismissed our action and mandated that we pay a substantial amount in court costs to the opposing party, approximately 40,000 euros. I have filed an appeal against this decision.

A file initiated three years ago concerning the falsification of documentation that served as the basis for issuing a framing decision for the approval of a forest development project by OS Boisoara Forest Enterprise has been closed for the second time without any substantive investigations into the reported crimes, prompting the complainant to file a new complaint with the court.

We submitted a complaint against the DNA, which fails to acknowledge our status as injured parties in the criminal complaints we initiated to protect the brown bear species.

Make a donation to the initiatives, either monthly or as a one-time contribution. We cannot undertake this battle alone. Let us provide the







At the close of the year, we successfully preserved 29,058 hectares of forest from Băile Herculane to the Court of Appeal. Before this legal action, Agent Green had filed a lawsuit against the same defendants to obtain a halt to the logging, asserting that it was unlawful. Although the preliminary trial was unsuccessful, the main trial yielded a favorable outcome. This indicates that for nine years, illegal logging occurred in Băile Herculane due to improper forest management practices.

The trial extended over five years and incurred substantial costs due to the additional expertise mandated by the court. The court nullified the minister's order approving the forest management plan for the Băile Hereculane bypass. This victory underscores that the ministry, the environmental protection agency, and Romsilva are the primary adversaries of the forest, despite their responsibility to safeguard it.

The Court dismissed the exceptions raised by the Ministry and Romsilva as baseless. It accepted the requests of Agent Green and acknowledged the exception of illegality concerning the Decision of the framing stage no. 11/29.03.2013 issued by the National Agency for Environmental Protection.

I AM NATURE

- What accomplishments have we realized to date?
- In partnership with the school inspectorates of the counties and the Municipality of Bucharest during the pandemic (April 2020 June 2022), we received more than 130 requests for assistance with online workshops.
- Through the educators who supplied us with the online platforms already utilized by the students, we successfully supported over 70 activities focused on eco-education topics.
- We engaged with 43 schools and high schools across 29 localities, including Botoşani, Iasi, Dorohoi, Cluj, Motru, Galati, Timisoara, Resita, Vulcan, Bistrita, Prundu Bârgăului, Berbeşti, Protopopeşti, Vladeni, Holboca, Săcele, Caracal, Videle, Petroşani, Poieni, Rm Vâlcea, Baia Mare, Plowari, Ruscova, Sălsig, Boiu Mare, Vima Mică, Floreşti, and Bucharest.
- To date, over 70 educators have participated in this project, facilitating interactions with more than 1,400 students.
- Through the initiative "Agent Green Comes to You in the Classroom!" (November 2022 February 2023), we successfully collaborated on a national scale with more than 40 educators from primary, secondary, and high school levels. This effort enabled us to engage over 500 students across 27 schools in 20 cities.
- The activities were conducted in accordance with the brochures Agent Green "Activities for the Understanding and Protection of Nature" (for grades I VIII)
 and the Guide for High School Students.



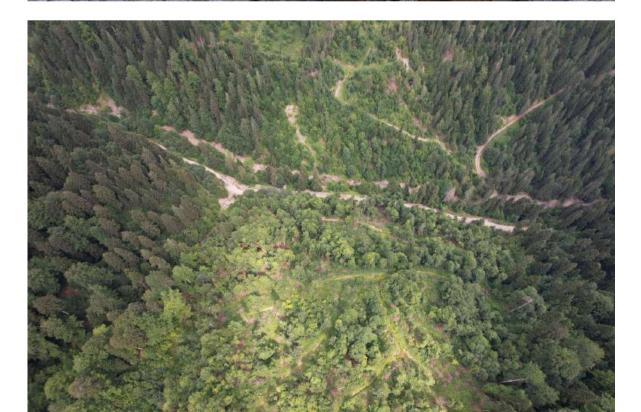
Regrettably, 2023 may mark the final year for Sunt Natura. Despite our deep affection for this project, we can no longer sustain its funding due to a significant decline in necessary donations. We firmly believe that only education can rescue the Planet.











BALKAN PERSPECTIVE



In 2023, Balkan Insight recognized us in its compilation of Heroes of 2023: Individuals Who Made a Difference. The article can be found here.



PLANTING IN FAGĂRAŞ

The 100-hectare clear-cut in Făgăraş has been granted a second opportunity after a decade of stagnation in its recovery. We aim to restore at least half of this area, and with your assistance, we are nearing the achievement of this objective. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to our donors, volunteers, and supporters!

We eagerly anticipate cherishing our forest for many years to come! The richness of the Făgăraş Mountains is unparalleled in Europe and globally, and together we have fortified a significant area.

This area served as the habitat for numerous large carnivores and a diverse array of flora. Due to its inability to fully recover independently and the relentless fragmentation of a region rich in biodiversity, we selected it five years ago. We are consistently delighted each time we visit to observe its growth year after year.

It comprises a blend of pine, spruce, and beech species, positioned at varying elevations based on adaptability and the surrounding forest.







PLANTING IN BACAU

We have cultivated a diverse forest comprising numerous species on previously degraded agricultural land. This experiment has been a long-standing aspiration; however, state regulations have made it challenging to obtain permission for planting. It was not until 2023 that we successfully implemented this initiative on two plots in Bacău County. We also aim to extend this project to Dobrogea, where aridification is particularly severe.



NATURE 2000 REPORT

We have released a comprehensive report on the current developments within the Natura 2000 protected areas in Romania. We encourage you to read it in full here.



Despite being embroiled in infringement proceedings due to intentional reductions, the authorities have yet to address the issue, which appears to be worsening. In the past two years alone, a quantity of timber sufficient to fill a line of trucks from Romania to China has been extracted from Romania's protected regions. I brought this to light in the European Parliament and led a delegation to the devastated areas in our country to reveal the reality.





PROTECTED AREAS



Protected areas faced threats from an EGO with considerable loopholes, prompting us to express our concerns. Agent Green's campaign for the safeguarding of protected areas will persist until they receive genuine protection. Agent Green's goal is to ensure that at least 10% of Romania's territory is strictly protected. To date, we have achieved just over 2%.

Field MEPs and journalists' Visit

Another significant activity was the on-site visit with MEPs and journalists to the Natura 2000 site. The presence of specialists among the group contributed to an entirely authentic experience. Watch the video and share your thoughts!





PROTEST FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF LEGALITY

Organizațiile protestatare cer Guvernului și Parlamentului României să retragă tot pachetul legislativ deja adoptat și cel în curs de adoptare.





Numerous freedoms have been jeopardized in 2023. Under these circumstances, the operations of organizations become nearly unfeasible, prompting us to unite with civil society to safeguard our rights to expression, funding, existence, and justice.

Saturday, March the On Agent organizations Green, Bankwatch, Corruption Kills. Dăruiește Viață, Declic, Eco-Civica, Greenpeace, and the Romania Initiative convened in Piața Victoriei, Bucharest, to protest against a legislative package that jeopardizes the principles of the rule of law and seeks to dismantle environmental protection contravening legislation, European treaties and the Romanian Constitution. The protest garnered support from notable public figures, including actor Tudor Chirilă.

ROMSILVA RESET

The Romsilva reform represents one of the earliest campaigns initiated by Agent Green, and we are no longer the sole protesters against it. The pressing necessity for responsible management, devoid of conflicts of interest and aligned with the interests of both nature and society, has become increasingly evident. This is underscored by Romsilva's response, which appears to acknowledge the impending conclusion of the reckless practices that have resulted in the illegal and unethical exploitation of Romania's valuable resources, rather than pursuing more sustainable alternatives that were feasible.



Reforma Romsilva este absolut necesară

Romsilva s-a revoltat astăzi în fața Guvernului pentru că este pe cale să piardă monopolul asupra administrării, controlului și exploatării pădurii României. Agent Green atrage atenția că reforma Romsilva care include...

Agent Green / Jan 13, 2023



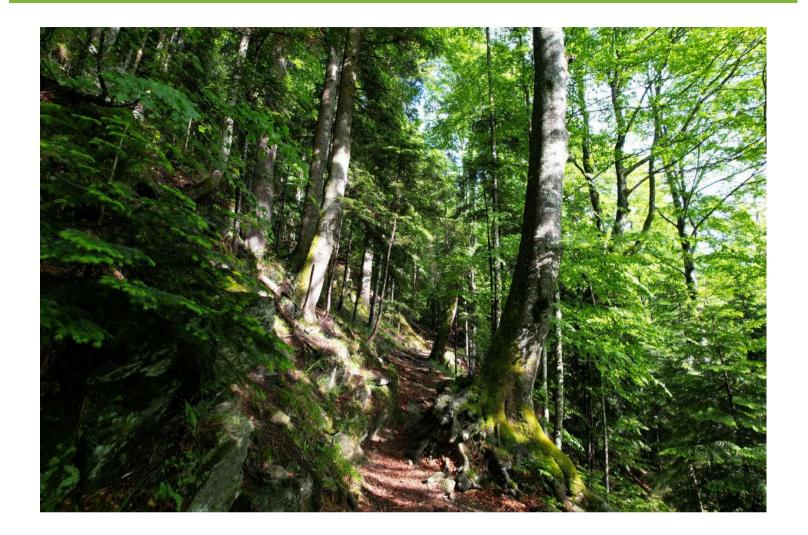
NATIONAL PARKS



The campaign for national parks persists until all 13 currently established parks are rigorously safeguarded across at least 75% of their area. Over the past 14 years, our initiatives have resulted in an increase of the strictly protected region from approximately 30% to over 605. Thus, we are nearing a significant victory. National parks represent the most esteemed category of protected areas globally.

We engage in discussions in Parliament, submit addresses, and initiate lawsuits—we explore every avenue until ministers and communities recognize that there are no drawbacks. The absence of Făgăraş as a national park is a matter that profoundly troubles us, as we witness firsthand the extensive clearing of valuable trees across vast areas.





SAVE THE PRISTINE FORESTS

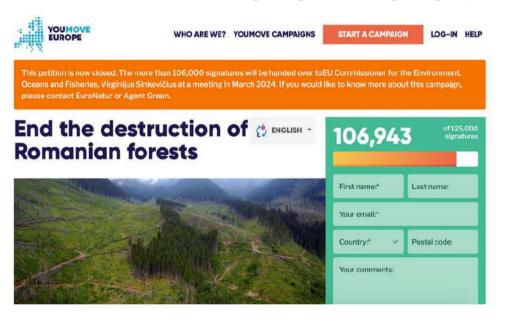
Virgin forests in Romania are experiencing significant loss, while authorities commend the preservation of small areas. When organizations from other countries seek to protect these forests, regarded as Europe's last wild treasures, they are often accused of harboring ulterior motives.

The files have been archived for years, while the trees are planted by individuals significantly younger than they are.

Our campaign persists, and 2023 marks a year in which more environmental organizations are advocating for the preservation of old-growth forests.



Am lansat o nouă petiție pentru păduri, pentru Parlamentul European. Alături de parteerii de la Euronatur, cerem măsuri care se pot implementa simplu, rapid și eficient.



To the EU Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevičius

This petition is run by EuroNatur foundation, Agent Green PETITION

Stop the destruction of primary and old-growth forests in Romania and impose a moratorium on ongoing logging in Natura 2000 sites.

Moreover, we urge you to refer Romania to the Court of Justice of the European Union since the Romanian Government has been unwilling to stop the ongoing destruction of protected forests since the infringement procedure was started four years ago.

Even if it is too late for tens of thousands of hectares of destroyed trees, it is not too late for the last remaining Romanian ancient forests. And it is not too late for you to act, to make a real difference for Romanian, and thus European primary and old-growth forests.



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Romanian primary and old-growth forests (POGFs) are still being cut without regard to their ecological, conservation and climate change relevance and without appropriate assessment and full disclosure of these activities or their legality.

Many protected animals depend on them for survival. For people worldwide, the Romanian Carpathian Forests are our global natural heritage and must be preserved to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss together. As valuable carbon sinks, they bind millions of tonnes of CO2, among other things, contribute to the formation of oxygen and protect the soil from erosion by storing the water in it.

In the last two years, <u>only looking at 0.01% of logging permits</u> already showed that more than 60,000 cubic meters of trees were removed within 5 Natura 2000 protected areas – equivalent to 420 football fields.

Given this systemic problem, Romanian authorities must be held legally accountable.

Only 3% of EU forested land and patches are covered by primary and old-growth forests which count among the richest EU forest ecosystems. With at least 525,000 hectares of potential primary and old-growth forests remaining, Romania holds one of the largest shares of POGFs among all EU member states. Around 300,000 hectares of Romanian woods are listed as Natura 2000 sites.

The 10th of September 2023 marked four years since the environmental NGOs EuroNatur, Agent Green, and ClientEarth, alerted the EU Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevičius, to the destruction of protected forests in Romania (complaint registered under the reference number CHAP(2019)02656).

Following the EU complaint, the European Commission opened an infringement procedure (registered under the ID INFR(2020)2033) against Romania by sending a letter of formal notice in February 2020 and a reasoned opinion in July 2020.

Since then, nothing has changed for the better – quite the opposite is the case! So, we need YOUR support to bring this issue to the forefront of the political agenda. SIGN our petition letting the EU know you do not stand for this destruction!

References:

[1] https://www.euronatur.org/fileadmin/docs/Urwald-

Kampagne_Rumaenien/Investigation_of_Romanian_forests_in_Natura_2000_sites.pdf

- [2] https://environment.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/SWD_guidance_protected_areas.pdf
- [3] https://forest.eea.europa.eu/countries/romania/forest-data

TEDX



We were honored to be invited and recognized at TedX, and we encourage you to view the speech if you have not done so already. It discusses the history of Agent Green and imparts numerous life lessons.







GREEN BELT



The Green Belt surrounding Bucharest is absolutely essential, as every large and thriving city possesses one. This concept, originating in the 1990s and championed by Alex Gavan, has garnered support and collaboration, and we are pleased to be involved. The decision now rests with Parliament.



INTERNATIONAL OPEN LETTER



Several organizations from across the globe have united to communicate to the US climate authorities the significance and immediacy of safeguarding old-growth trees. The complete letter is available on the website.



ASPRETULA, IN PERIL



We staged a protest in the Vâlsan Valley, located in the Făgăraș Mountains, to protect the aspretula, a species that has existed for 65 million years and survived the last Cretaceous extinction that led to the demise of the dinosaurs. This species can only be found in the Valea Vâlsanului Nature Reserve within the Făgăraș Mountains. Due to habitat degradation, it has been unable to reproduce in recent years, rendering its extinction imminent.

Logging occurs in both primary and secondary forests within state forests, as well as in the Muntentia forest bypass, for which the Ministry of the Environment has already sought its abolition due to numerous illegalities. Tens of thousands of cubic meters of timber have been extracted from Valea Vâlsanului. Additionally, the Făgăraş Mountains area is under scrutiny from the European Commission for violations against the Ministry of the Environment, specifically concerning unlawful logging in Natura 2000 protected areas.





SAVE THE BROWN BEAR



2023 marked another successful year in our efforts to block trophy hunting. We submitted a new petition to the European Parliament, which is available for review here. I initiated legal action against DNA for failing to fulfill its responsibilities in the case of Arthur the bear and reported the High Court of Cassation and Justice to the United Nations Aarhus Committee regarding issues of corruption.

The Ministry of the Environment operates in stark contrast to the principles of science and ethics. It prioritizes the interests of trophy hunters at the expense of safeguarding both human welfare and biodiversity.

We effectively thwarted Tanczos Barna's attempt on his final day in the ministry to authorize the culling of nearly 500 bears. The struggle will persist into 2024.

MY FOREST



With the support of Metrorex Romania, the Pădurea Mea campaign was successfully conducted across all metro stations for a duration of two weeks. We were pleased to observe the positive impact on individuals who encountered us through this initiative, and we extend our gratitude to Metrorex for facilitating this opportunity.





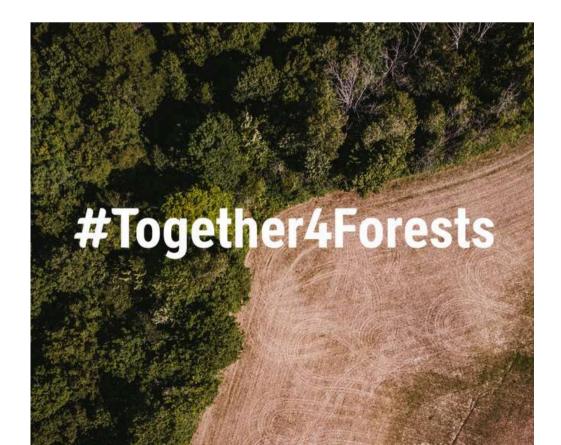


TOGETHER4FORESTS

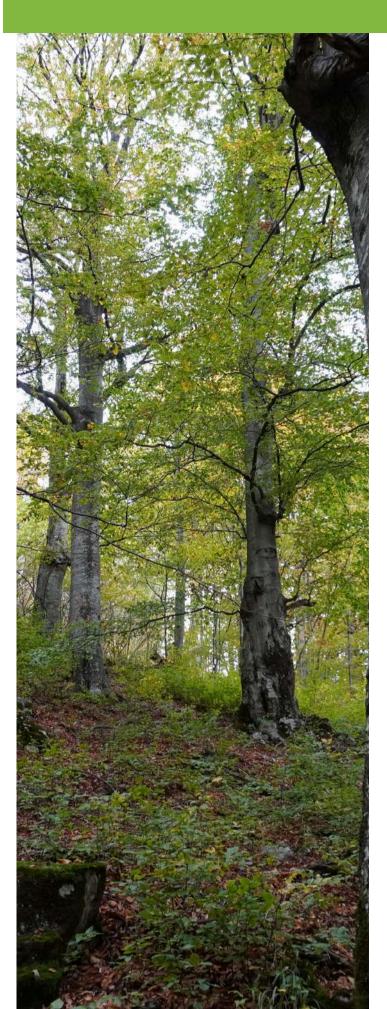


Victory! At last, the international initiative has concluded, resulting in a significant triumph: products linked to deforestation will no longer occupy EU shelves! As the second-largest consumer, we bore a substantial responsibility, which we are now beginning to embrace.

It is astonishing to consider the extensive reach of these practices and how we inadvertently become complicit in them, often without realizing our role in the chain.





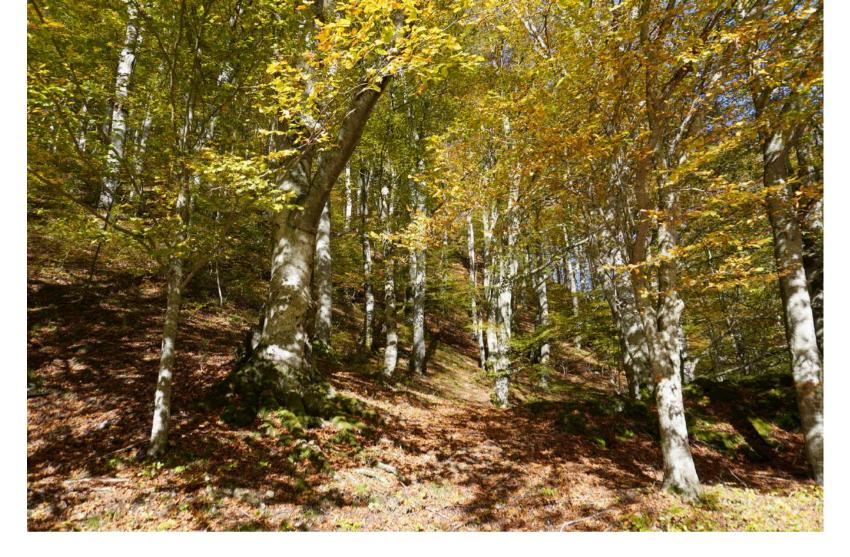


ADVOCACY

The forestry new code, the iudicial environmental system's complaint to the European Commission, SUMAL, national parks and pristine brown forests. the bear, environmental education, as well as efforts to combat climate change, are all consistently featured on our advocacy both agenda. At national international levels, we actively engage in enhancing environmental legislation.

The challenge we frequently encounter is that the authorities are often unwilling to engage with us or fail to adhere to legal protocols. This obstructs progress and contravenes the law, while our time and resources do not permit us to address every infraction. Therefore, it is crucial for each of you to contribute to advocacy efforts, which can occasionally require minimal time yet yield significant outcomes.

Regrettably, we concluded the year by bringing Romania before the ECHR (European Court of Human Rights) regarding the unresolved case from Râul Alb, involving the attempted murder of Gabriel Păun. Despite possessing video evidence, the court has consistently declined to address this tragedy for many years, which ultimately compelled us to take this action.







Report

FINANCIAL



INCOME

Individuals 3.5% - 49,218 lei Donations -205,418 lei Legal entities -202,847 lei Grants and foundations - 1,373,929 lei

EXPENSES

Salaries, fees, and taxes - 631,440 lei

Operations and administration - 1,272,834 lei, comprising:
Justice - 225,095 lei
Investigations - 218,282 lei
Sunt Nature - 71,124 lei
Miscellaneous expenses













THANK YOU!

