



South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Faculty of Economics

Location: Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

Website: <http://www.swu.bg/>



Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Dep. of Forestry and Natural Environment,
Laboratory of Forest Genetics and Plant Breeding

Location: Campus of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and Establishments of the Dep. of Forestry and
Natural Environment, Konstantinou Kakoulidi and Dimokritou, Foinikas, Thessaloniki, Greece

Website: www.for.auth.gr

www.batsconserve.com
<http://www.greece-bulgaria.eu/>

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European Regional Development Fund



SUSTAINABLE BATS CONSERVATION IN THE CROSS BORDER AREA





➤ What is the project about?

The BatsConserve project was launched in September 2017 under the Cooperation Programme Greece-Bulgaria 2014-2020 with the main goal to improve the bat population (Chiroptera) along the Mesta (Nestos) River and caves in the region of Momchilgrad - Komotini through joint activities on conservation of significant bat habitats. It comprises partner institutions from Greece and Bulgaria, which will help overcome national borders and build shared knowledge on biodiversity and transnational ecosystems on the Balkans.

➤ Why is it important?

Bats are species of high conservation status - subject to Biological Diversity Act, Bern Convention, Bonn Convention, EU-ROBATS, Habitat Directive, IUCN Red List. Bats are essential for nature. The big-sized bats eat various moths and worms that

are harmful to agriculture and forestry. The small-sized bats eat mosquitoes and other double-winged insects - carriers of disease such as malaria and leishmania. Bats that eat fruit and flowers disperse seeds of more than 500 species of trees and shrubs and pollinate flowers. Guano, or bat's droppings, is the highest quality natural fertilizer. It contains much more nitrogen and phosphate than other natural or artificial fertilizers. Considering the distribution of bats in the cross border area, their sustainable conservation requires joint actions. Common cross border challenges connected with bats are: increasing use of pesticides in agriculture, which poisons the bats who consume them, disturbance of colonies, particularly by people exploring caves in winter. Human presence disturbs hibernating bats, causing bats to lose their energy and leading to exhaustion and death. The BatsConserve project aims at negating these threats.

➤ What are the expected results?

Project outputs consist of the following:

- 1) Database on species composition and state of bats within the project area;
- 2) Map of bat habitats;
- 3) Three assessments on species diversity, activity and habitats of bats, potential threats and favourable conservation status, and on species diversity through DNA analysis;
- 4) Placed bat boxes;
- 5) Three Guidelines on bats conservation - in agro lands, in forests and in urban areas;
- 6) Six trainings on bats conservation for achieving awareness among farmers, forestries, local people (students) and people with disabilities;
- 7) Study on the correlation of populations of bats and adult mosquitoes.

➤ Who will benefit from the project?

The Bats Conserve project will support policy and action plans by integrating scientific knowledge into guidance documents. It will combine nature conservation and technology for the creation of interactive geo portal on bats conservation, which will be publicly available.

The project will also contribute to a better conservation status of the bat fauna and thus improve the welfare of local communities.

