

**An innovation campus to  
kickstart a landscape level  
nature based economy**

Co-working  
Sustainable living  
Wilderness experiences  
Nature-economy accelerator

**in Armeniş, Carpathian  
Mountains, Romania**



# The problem

We eat the resources that Earth can renew faster every year. In 2020, **Global overshoot day** was in **August**. **1 million** species threatened with extinction. **1° temperature increase** since pre-industrial times, heading for 1.5° C tipping point, **90% of** commercial fish stocks overfished.

We need to keep **30% of our landscapes and seascapes intact**, to **half our production and consumption footprint** and **zero biodiversity loss by 2030** - in order to sustain our life support systems and the people and economies that depend on it.

**Local & indigenous communities living in biodiversity hotspots are part of the solution.** Together we can reduce pressure on pristine areas and restore biodiversity where we still can. Wild landscapes provide valuable ecosystem services and counteract the damaging impacts of climate change.

## OUR SOLUTION:

An innovation hub to learn the new normal of doing business: building a nature positive socio-economic model to replicate nationally & internationally.

Our unsustainable engagement with Nature is endangering the prosperity of current and future generations.

We are facing complex environmental and socio-economic challenges that no farm, organization, or company can solve alone.

The solution starts with understanding and accepting a simple truth: our economies are embedded within Nature, not external to it.

Landscapes with high biodiversity, have higher resilience and higher natural capital flows in the long term.

Validate and grow an economic model based on nature in high biodiversity landscapes.

Bring prosperity to impoverished communities through new interlinked social enterprises.

# How it works

## Infrastructure for collaboration;

WeWilder Campus, a practice centre for sustainability in a biodiversity hotspot; a coworking campus, close to nature living facilities, immersive nature experiences and learning programmes for thought leaders & innovators

## Co-creation mindset, holistic approach

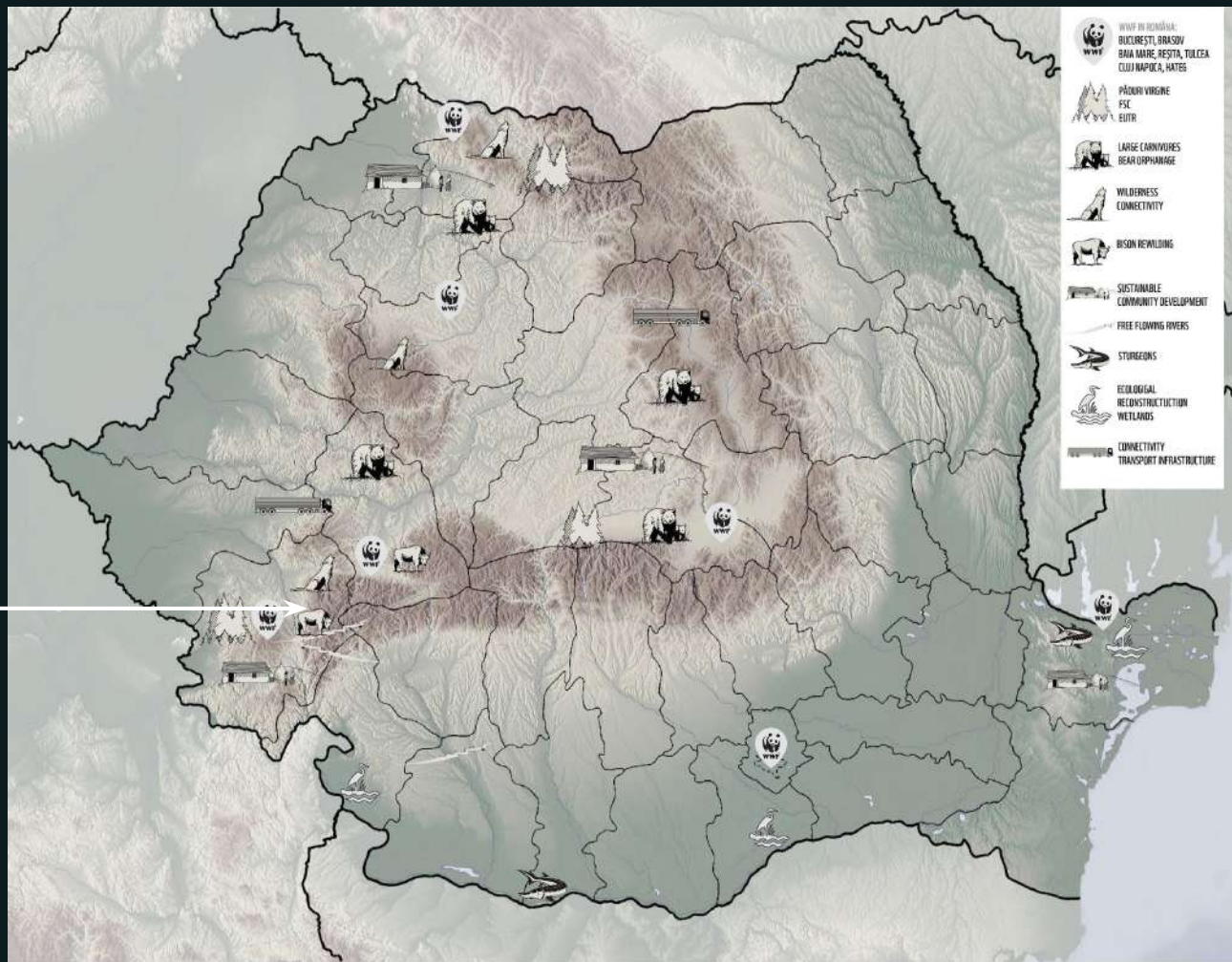
Idea generation workshops and accelerator for a nature-based solutions and enterprises; residency program, matchmaking urban professionals with local community members;

## Blueprint for self-sustaining wild landscapes

Library of nature-positive enterprise ideas, piloted locally; Operations manual for setting up collaboration labs; A standard for designing & monitoring future-proof enterprises at any scale; A community of experts who can guide the WeWilder journey elsewhere;



Located in the SW  
Carpathian mountains,  
a 350,000 ha landscape,  
largest wilderness area in  
the EU






WORKING  
TOGETHER FOR  
A WILDER  
NATURE IN THE  
SOUTHERN  
CARPATHIANS



### **WeWilder, Armeniș, Romania**

Located in the Țarcu Mountains, South Western Carpathians, this is the second bison rewilding site in Romania. WWF and Rewilding Europe are working together to create a stable free-roaming population in the South Western Carpathians.

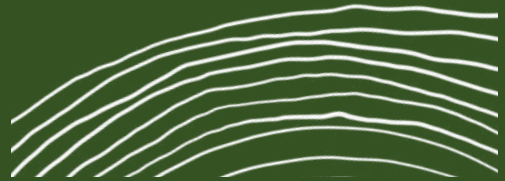
WeWilder is located 1.5 hours away from Timișoara, 3 hours away from Sibiu, 4 hours away from Belgrade.



A living lab for testing nature based solutions, accelerate a network of social & green enterprises, inspire new business ideas for a future proof economy.

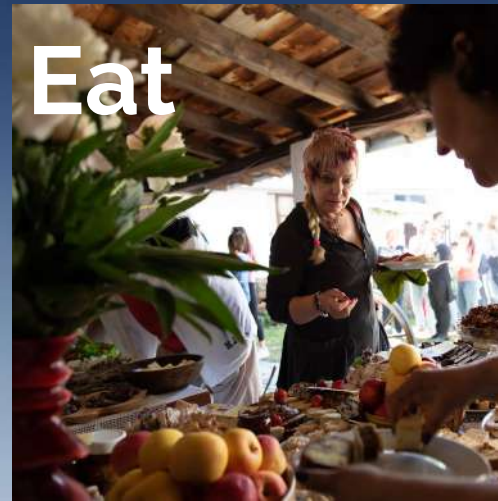
**1x shared common space & a bistro & communitary kitchen** where we convene for dining or sharing ideas

**3 x Individual cabins** with huge windows where people can reconnect to themselves, to nature and to their work.





# Experience how to live sustainably



# Stakeholders



## Direct beneficiaries

- 100 local and urban entrepreneurs involved in our accelerator programme
- 10 companies experience innovation programmes in nature
- 1000 professionals co-working from nature, living in WeWilder campus

## Medium term beneficiaries

- 2500 people and 300 youth from Armeniş and surroundings
- Innovation partners and businesses that will invest in nature-based solutions prototyped here

## Amplifiers

- W/WF network (100+ countries) who can copy-paste the model in other landscapes
- Environmental experts, business mentors, architects, design thinking experts, wilderness trainers, chefs, agroforestry practitioners involved in residency programmes

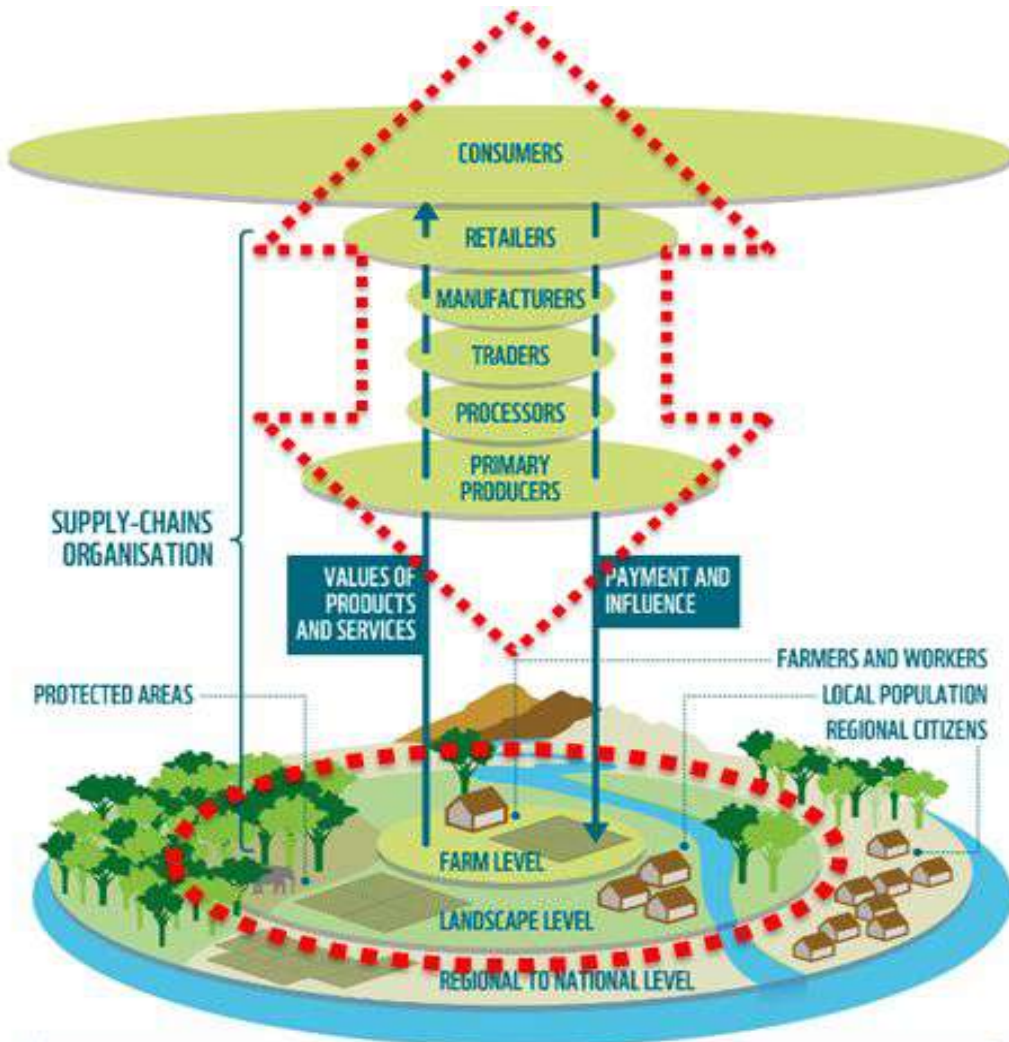
County  
Council  
Head of  
Cabinet

WWF

Local  
producer

Mayor

Gastronomy  
entrepreneur



## Linking stakeholders across the supply chain

Influence Sustainable Behaviours

Create incentives to change processes

Design and support financial instruments

# Objectives



1. Experiential training with local community members in core biodiversity areas in social entrepreneurship;
2. Stimulating locals to pilot social enterprise ideas based on nature through a incubation/acceleration programmes, including seed funding and mentorship across the way;
3. Increasing local nature-based jobs locally, direct benefits from intact or responsible management of natural resources (eg. small forest owners are able to be an example in responsible forest management)
4. Library of tested social-enterprise ideas based on superior valorization of forest and other natural resources by local communities (woodcraft, non timber forest products) and and a blueprint for the enterprise network framework MVP
5. Validating a living lab approach in the SW Carpathias and creating proof of success for local circular models that reduces threats to nature biodiversity degradation; Exchange of experience with locals from across the region.
6. Social entrepreneurship labs in two new areas of the Western Carpathians (3 labs for the W Carpathians)
7. Multi stakeholder support group for the living labs to scale social enterprise networks (eg. attract investment in a network vs. in one start-up or another, reducing risk)

# Impact in 2 years

- Create 5 jobs directly related to WeWilder campus (1st year)
- Generate 5 new nature businesses/year, 50 new local entrepreneurs in the first 5 years
- Inspire the building of 3 new huts/year in the spirit of WeWilder
- **50+** tons of carbon offset through **regeneration projects**
- **20** tons of plastic reduced through our zero-plastic and procurement principles
- Boost biodiversity of the WeWilder site and surroundings by 20% annually
- **1000** guests/year
- **30** companies involved in innovation workshops or sustainability trainings in the first 5 years
- **20** experts and scientists involved in mentorship & residency programmes, yearly

# Team

local doers &  
expert advisors



Oana  
Mondoc



Matei  
Miculescu



Alina  
Floroi



Daniel  
Hurduzeu



Zoltan  
Bereczki



Ioan  
Moldovan



Matius  
Ichim



Mihai  
Toader-Pasti



Krisztina  
Bokos



Sonia  
Oprean



Hanny  
Bratu



Christof  
Krattiger



Tiberiu  
Chiriches



Miodrag  
Stoianov



Catalin  
Gavrilă



Tudor  
Juravlea



Monica  
Miculescu



Oana  
Crîngașu



Cristian  
Vela



Dosia  
Vela



Wanda  
Hutira



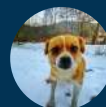
Alexandra  
Dumitrescu



Petru  
Vela



Georg  
Messerer



King

# 10 highlights in 6 years in Armeniș

- 60 free-roaming bison and an ambitious 10+ year commitment to create a viable sub-population
- 30 families consistently involved in hospitality over the past 3 years
- 5 stone or woods hamlets (old farmhouses) renovated with in-kind support from WWF staff and friends
- €20.000 average cash spent yearly on local products and services
- 5 global workshops and conferences held in Armeniș in the last 3 years
- 300 international guests take part annually in wildlife tracking experiences
- 50 national and international students have undertaken internships in the Bison Hillock area, since 2017
- Our story in: The Guardian, CNN, National Geographic (US), RTBF (Belgium), PBS (US), The Telegraph, RTVE (Spain) and many more
- 15 hunters are part of a pioneering behaviour change program
- 30+ children part of Active For Wilderness School Clubs





© Stefan Wiedersheim/Rewilding Europe

Butting back

## An ancient beast returns to Transylvania

Environmentalists in Romania are bringing back the European bison

CURT THE bison is not sure he wants to return to the wild. After 20 hours in a lorry from Germany to Romania, he takes a few hesitant steps down the ramp, chews at some leaves, then heads back inside. Two hours later he is still there, delaying the bolder females, stuck deeper inside the lorry. Finally the rangers shoot him with a tranquilliser dart. Eight men, two per hoof, carry him into an enclosure, where he quickly recovers. The other beasts trot dutifully after him across a small bridge. They will join two herds already about 50-strong. Transylvania just got a bit wilder.

[www.economist.com/europe/2019/08/22/an-ancient-beast-returns-to-transylvania](http://www.economist.com/europe/2019/08/22/an-ancient-beast-returns-to-transylvania)



Top 20s

### Where to go on holiday in 2020: the alternative hotlist

Our pick of 20 places to visit in 2020 celebrates inspiring conservation and community projects that are making a difference to people and the planet

[www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/jan/04/where-to-go-on-holiday-in-2020-alternative-hotlist-ethical-destinations](http://www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/jan/04/where-to-go-on-holiday-in-2020-alternative-hotlist-ethical-destinations)

#### Bears, bison and biodiversity

You don't have to fly to southern Africa to go on safari - Romania is one of the best places in Europe to see large mammals in the wild. The country has seven million hectares of forests - a significant proportion is ancient virgin woodland - and is home to the continent's largest populations of brown bears, as well as wolves and lynx.

There are challenges but ecotourism is growing organically here and lots of small-scale ethical businesses are opening

Besides benefiting local communities through wildlife tourism, the reintroduction of bison - which disappeared from Romania 200 years ago - will also increase biodiversity. In a separate venture by [Rewilding Europe](#) and WWF Romania, the European commission-funded [Life Bison](#) project has already released 60 animals in Carpathia's Tarcu and Poiana Ruscă mountains, with more to come this year. Bison-tracking holidays in the area are offered by the [European Safari Company](#) (part of Rewilding Europe). A two-night experience costs from €299, including guiding and meals. The [Bison Hillock Association](#), also involved in the project, offers a choice of trips, too, with hiking, cycling and homestay options.

While the country faces issues with extensive illegal logging (two rangers were killed last autumn trying to protect the forests, and protesters took to the streets in November demanding more government action), ecotourism is increasing steadily.



GREAT BIG STORY



PODCAST

SERIES

PLAYLISTS

CHANNELS

GUIDES

## Re-wilding Europe, One Bison at a Time

When you think of Europe, wild animals roaming through open fields isn't the first thing that comes to mind, right? Well, you might be surprised to learn that 18 percent of Europe's land is protected nature. Thanks to the efforts of one organization, Europe's wildness is also being restored, starting with the reintroduction of European bison.

LOCATION

NATURE

Armenis, Romania



[www.greatbigstory.com/stories/rewilding-europe-one-bison-at-a-time](http://www.greatbigstory.com/stories/rewilding-europe-one-bison-at-a-time)

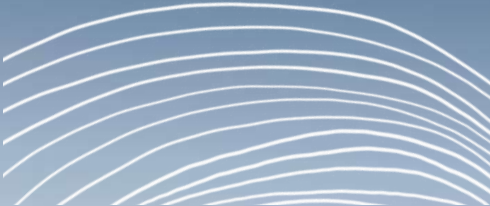
# WWF's validated MVP of a “mini” social enterprise network

For the past 3 years WWF and locals have co-created wilderness exploration programmes, ecotourism infrastructure and mentored local hospitality teams, now working as a mini enterprise network; over 30 families have been involved and 20,000 eur/year generated for local products and services in a bison rewilding area. We envision that participatory experiences within conservation activities will accelerate local development by motivating locals to better manage their wild areas, nurture positive attitudes towards and reduce unsustainable use of nature.

WeWilder Campus, WWF's first innovation hub for green and social entrepreneurship located in the South Western Carpathians. Its purpose is to create conditions for a social enterprise business network model and initiatives based on nature and the circular economy, which protect nature, create prosperity and reduce socio-economic and environmental threats and which can be scaled to other national or international regions. It includes a network of close to nature living facilities, that invites people from the city to support the community through tourism or by volunteering with their expertise for local development.

We(eat)Wilder, a community kitchen and social enterprise has been legally set up as an association of WWF and local community. In 2021 we will pilot production of non-timber forest products packaged foods (power snacks, conserves, wild honey, dried food) and gastronomic experiences around foraging and immersing in local agricultural practices.

# 10 Reasons To support WeWilder



1. Change the business as usual approach to support green initiatives and be an innovator

2. Work with one of the most prominent nature conservation NGO's in the world

3. Get inspiration for new products to support communities

4. We Wilder will be a model in terms of sustainability standards.

5. Give the employees the occasion to self-discover and engage with nature and communities

6. You support a world changing collaborative model that will multiply in new regions.

7. You and your employees will become part of a vibrant, diverse community of creative people.

8. You make an impactful contribution in one of the richest biodiversity areas in Europe.

9. You offer something good for the children's future.

10. You make the bison happy.

# Get in touch



Oana Mondoc - Project Coordinator  
[omondoc@wwf.ro](mailto:omondoc@wwf.ro) 00 40 721 819 595

Alina Floroi - Cohesion Facilitator  
[afloroi@wwf.ro](mailto:afloroi@wwf.ro) 00 40 722 619 960