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PRESS RELEASE

The Hunting Federation of Macedonia and Thrace, as Lead Beneficiary, participates in the approved project "Certified Environmental Actors - CEA", supported by Cooperation Programme "INTERREG V-A Greece-Bulgaria" 2014 - 2020. The project has been approved within priority axis 2: "A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area" and more specifically in investment priority 6d: "Protecting and restoring biodiversity, soil protection and restoration and promoting ecosystem services including NATURA 2000 and green infrastructures".

The project involves the following project partners:

Project Beneficiary 2: Association of Hunters in K. Nevrokopi "ARTEMIS"

Project Beneficiary 3: Municipality of Kato Nevrokopi

Project Beneficiary 4: Association "EURORADAR" (Bulgaria)

Project Beneficiary 5: Association of Hunters and Fishermen "Sokol" (Bulgaria)

CEA project outlines that in the cross border area, there is a large number of NATURA 2000 protected areas and unique ecosystems with rare biodiversity richness. In addition, there is a significant number of hunters, who are members of local associations, and other stakeholders who can contribute to the biodiversity and natural sources protection. The main objective of the project is to protect and conserve biodiversity and ecosystem by training, motivating and activating environmental actors, which will allow the active participation of them in environmental and biodiversity protection and ecosystem promotion. The idea is to certify, educate and develop skills (wildlife identification, survival skills, etc) to environmental actors (hunters, rescuers, general public etc) through certification thematic courses combining theoretical and practical training with available infrastructure. In this way, the "Environmental Actors" such as hunters, forest rangers etc. will receive the necessary education and skills in order to contribute to the biodiversity protection in the cross border area.

The project will deliver a permanent structure capable to educate environmental actors in order to prevent issues like tourist disturbances, poaching, pollution and downgrading of our ecosystem. The idea is to provide appropriate education to each group of environmental actors regarding its thematic specialty aided by augmented reality software in Educational and Certification Centers (theoretical training) and develop skills in the common cross-border Environmental Actors Training Field (practical training) useful to contribute to the protection of natural cross border assets.

The project will deliver the necessary educational tools (e.g. augmented reality software and hardware), framework and infrastructure which will be piloted among the cross border population. At the end, it is expected that project's publicity and communication plan will focus on changing the existing national and regional policies towards a model that will rely on education, training and raising awareness.

The implementation of this project will directly result on creating individual well-trained and certified actors who can contribute on environmental and biodiversity protection and promotion. It is expected that public will come closer to cross-border natural assets through the promotional campaigns, publicity events and the implementation of other communication activities. Moreover, the environmental actors community will be expanded across the whole cross-border program area because of the adopted innovative approaches on certifying and networking.