



TECHNICAL REPORT / MAY 2026

# Nature Returns Supporting Entrepreneurship for Nature Conservation

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# Nature Returns Supporting Entrepreneurship for Nature Conservation

Summary and analysis of activities conducted within  
the Nature Returns Programme

MAY 2026



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**Front cover:** Group photo of invited entrepreneurs at the Nature Returns Príncipe Academy for Entrepreneurs, taken after the closing of the event, on 8 May 2025.

**Back cover:** Photo of the premises of Lonjsko Polje Nature Park in Croatia, taken during a dedicated Nature Area Visit activity on 14 May 2025.

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Nature Returns is a business for nature project in collaboration with:



# Contents

<b>1) Introduction</b> .....	5
<b>2) Pilot Nature Areas and Main Challenges</b> .....	6
2.1 Lonjsko Polje Nature Park (Croatia).....	6
2.2 Pico Island Nature Park (Portugal) .....	6
2.3 Príncipe Nature Park (São Tomé and Príncipe) .....	6
2.4 Shar Mountain National Park (North Macedonia) .....	6
2.5 Ulcinj Salina Nature Park (Montenegro).....	6
<b>3) Call for Ideas and Call for Entrepreneurs</b> .....	7
<b>4) Nature Returns Academy for Entrepreneurs</b> .....	8
<b>5) Final Pitch Events and Venture Selection</b> .....	9
5.1 Lonjsko Polje (Croatia) .....	9
5.2 Pico Island Nature Park (Portugal) .....	9
5.3 Príncipe Nature Park (São Tomé and Príncipe) .....	9
5.4 Shar Mountain National Park (North Macedonia) .....	10
5.5 Ulcinj Salina Nature Park (Montenegro) .....	10
<b>6) Post-Selection Business Support</b> .....	11
6.1 Lonjsko Polje (Croatia) .....	11
6.2 Pico Island Nature Park (Portugal) .....	11
6.3 Príncipe Nature Park (São Tomé and Príncipe) .....	13
6.4 Shar Mountain National Park (North Macedonia) .....	13
6.5. Ulcinj Salina Nature Park (Montenegro) .....	15
<b>7) Lessons Learned</b> .....	17
<b>8) Feedback</b> .....	18
<b>9) Conclusion</b> .....	18

## Annexes

- A1) Príncipe Nature Park Academy for entrepreneurs**
- A2) Shar Mountain National Park Academy for entrepreneurs**
- A3) Ulcinj Salina Nature Park Academy for entrepreneurs**
- A4) Workshop for entrepreneurs**

## 1) Introduction

Nature Returns is a five-year pilot initiative demonstrating how conservation, innovation, and stakeholder-driven entrepreneurship can jointly address environmental pressures in protected areas across Europe and Africa. Implemented across five pilot nature areas, the project connects ecosystem restoration with sustainable local economic development by supporting entrepreneurs whose business ideas contribute directly to nature conservation.

The project is based on the principle that long-term conservation outcomes are most effective when local communities, entrepreneurs, park authorities, and experts are actively involved in designing and implementing solutions. Through this collaborative approach, Nature Returns transforms conservation from a purely institutional responsibility into a shared local mission.

The Nature Returns model combines:

- Identification of key environmental and socio-economic challenges affecting each protected area through local assessments and stakeholder engagement;
- Calls for Ideas and Calls for Entrepreneurs inviting local stakeholders to propose business solutions addressing the environmental challenges while supporting sustainable economic development;
- Tailored onsite Academies for selected entrepreneurs focused on business development, investment readiness, and conservation impact;
- Final pitch events where entrepreneurs presented refined business proposals for evaluation and selection for incubation support; and
- Continuous mentoring and business development assistance supporting entrepreneurs throughout the implementation and growth of their ventures.

Across all pilot sites, the initiative supported the development of nature-positive businesses capable of generating both environmental and socio-economic benefits.

## 2) Pilot Nature Areas and Main Challenges

Nature Returns was implemented across five protected areas with distinct ecosystems, governance structures, and local realities. In each location, stakeholder consultations and assessments helped identify key environmental pressures and entrepreneurial opportunities.

### 2.1 Lonjsko Polje Nature Park (Croatia)

One of Europe's largest natural floodplains, Lonjsko Polje supports exceptional biodiversity while preserving traditional grazing practices and rural heritage. Key challenges identified included agrochemical use, invasive species, undergrazing, fungal pathogens affecting ash trees, and rural depopulation.

### 2.2 Pico Island Nature Park (Portugal)

Located in the Azores, Pico Island Nature Park includes UNESCO-protected vineyard landscapes, volcanic ecosystems, and endemic biodiversity. Main pressures included invasive species, abandonment of wine production, illegal construction, marine erosion, and trail degradation.

### 2.3 Príncipe Nature Park (São Tomé and Príncipe)

This globally important biodiversity hotspot contains tropical forests and highly endemic ecosystems. Threats identified included logging, charcoal production, invasive species, plastic pollution, excessive hunting, and mangrove degradation.

### 2.4 Shar Mountain National Park (North Macedonia)

Shar Mountain combines alpine biodiversity with centuries-old pastoral traditions. Main threats included illegal logging, poaching, water pollution, forest fires, land abandonment, and unsustainable infrastructure development.

### 2.5 Ulcinj Salina Nature Park (Montenegro)

Ulcinj Salina is a unique wetland ecosystem and a critical Adriatic bird habitat. Key environmental pressures included invasive species, pollution, visitor disturbance, poaching, overgrowth of ponds and canals, and water management challenges

Despite the diversity of ecosystems involved, common themes emerged across all pilot sites, including biodiversity loss, invasive species, land abandonment, and declining traditional livelihoods. Nature Returns addressed these issues by turning conservation needs into entrepreneurial opportunities.

### 3) Call for Ideas and Call for Entrepreneurs

The Calls for Ideas and Calls for Entrepreneurs meant the beginning of the Nature Returns process, looking to transform locally identified environmental pressures into entrepreneurial opportunities. These open calls invited residents, innovators, and small businesses to propose practical solutions capable of generating environmental and economic value.

The Call for Ideas focused on early-stage concepts, while the Call for Entrepreneurs requested more advanced proposals supported by business planning and implementation strategies.

Across all pilot areas, the programme received:

- At least **57** early-stage **ideas**;
- More than **40** formal **business proposals**; and
- **Selected 32 ventures** for intensive support through the onsite Academies.

Pilot Site	Ideas submitted	Business proposals	Ventures selected for the Academy
Lonjsko Polje	9	10	5
Pico Island	Hackathon model	7	6
Príncipe	18	Direct progression	8
Shar Mountain	15	15	8
Ulcinj Salina	15	8	5

Table 1: Results of Calls by Pilot Sites

The process demonstrated strong local interest in nature-based entrepreneurship and helped build awareness of conservation challenges while strengthening local ownership of proposed solutions.

## 4) Nature Returns Academy for Entrepreneurs

The Academy for Entrepreneurs, designed and delivered by Connectology, represented the project's core capacity-building component. Delivered onsite across all five pilot areas, the Academies helped transform early-stage concepts into implementation-ready ventures through practical training, mentoring, networking, and field visits.

A major strength of the Academy model was its tailored design. Each programme was adapted to local realities, conservation priorities, and the maturity of participating entrepreneurs. Training topics included:

- Business planning;
- Legal and financial management;
- Risk mitigation;
- Pitching and communication;
- Access to funding, including discussions with regional and national stakeholders on potential future matching funding opportunities; and
- Environmental impact alignment.

Field visits to the protected areas also played an important role by strengthening entrepreneurs' understanding of local environmental challenges and helping align ventures with conservation needs.

Across the five pilot sites, the Academies delivered:

- **5** onsite programmes;
- **15** training **days**;
- **26 speakers**, and
- Support for **32 ventures**.

## 5) Final Pitch Events and Venture Selection

Following the Academies, entrepreneurs refined their business models with Connectology's suggestions and support and presented final proposals to expert juries composed of conservation specialists, park representatives, and business experts.

Proposals were evaluated according to:

- Benefits to the nature area;
- Contribution to reducing environmental threats; and
- Business viability.

Across all pilot sites:

- 22 mature business proposals reached the final stage; and
- 15 ventures were selected for implementation support.

The selected ventures were the following:

### 5.1 Lonjsko Polje (Croatia)

- *OPG Grgić* - A family business producing honey in the Lonjsko Polje area, aiming to expand its educational activities by developing an open-air educational park, and to increase the visibility and commercial reach of its honey products

### 5.2 Pico Island Nature Park (Portugal)

- *Sintrópico* - A consultancy initiative focused on ecosystem restoration, agroecology, and Nature-Based Solutions, providing technical support to farmers, landowners, entrepreneurs, and local stakeholders.
- *Impact.Az* - An initiative of cultivation of mate plants as a sustainable agricultural alternative.
- *Eco Desafíos* - An ecohunting and nature management project focused on controlling invasive goat and sheep populations to support biodiversity conservation and reduce ecological pressure on local ecosystems.
- *Picochar* - An innovative circular-economy initiative to transform invasive plant species into biochar and biostimulants.

### 5.3 Príncipe Nature Park (São Tomé and Príncipe)

- *Ecological Bricks* - A sustainable construction initiative that produces ecological bricks from locally sourced materials.
- *Captive Breeding of Red Snails* - A nature-based business initiative focused on breeding and commercialising invasive snail species in São Tomé and Príncipe.

#### 5.4 Shar Mountain National Park (North Macedonia)

- *Viktorijan Hajts Dooel* - A family business initiative focused on the production of wooden pellets through the use of wood waste collected in the Shar Mountain region.
- *Mountain Experience LLC Skopje* - A via ferrata climbing route and adventure tourism infrastructure within the National Park.
- *Mountaineering Club Ljuboten - Tetovo* - sustainable cultivation of *Sideritis scardica*, commonly known as Shar Mountain tea, reducing pressure from illegal wild harvesting.
- *Nature Nomads* - A digital platform promoting eco-tourism in the Sharr Mountains;
- *Summer School* - A nature-based summer school programme within Shar Mountain National Park

#### 5.5 Ulcinj Salina Nature Park (Montenegro)

- *Camping Association of Montenegro* - A low-impact camper area connected to the revitalisation of the Ulcinj Salina Nature Park.
- *Flamingo Ride* - a sustainable mobility initiative designed to improve visitors' access to and experience within the Ulcinj Salina Nature Park through the use of electric scooters adapted to natural terrain.
- *Reborn by Adventures* - Cycling and walking tours, birdwatching experiences, and educational nature-based activities designed to promote the area, attract visitors, raise environmental awareness, and support local economic activity

These ventures demonstrated how, through entrepreneurship, they could directly contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and/or complement the management capacity of the protected areas while creating sustainable local economic opportunities, so they received the Grant support conceded by Nature Returns, and the Business Development Support by Connectology.

## 6) Post-Selection Business Support

To maximise the long-term success of selected ventures, Connectology implemented a structured six-month business development support programme after the Academies.

The support framework included:

- Regular one-to-one mentoring calls;
- Strategic business guidance;
- Investment readiness assessments;
- Educational materials;
- Webinars and workshops; and
- Personalised helpdesk support.

A key strength of the programme was its flexibility and tailored approach. Rather than applying a standardised support model, mentoring was adapted to the maturity, sector, operational context, and specific challenges faced by each entrepreneur. Regular follow-up sessions also played an important role in maintaining motivation, strengthening founder confidence, and helping entrepreneurs navigate uncertainties during the implementation phase.

The following sections provide an overview of the business development support delivered to each selected venture across the five pilot sites.

### 6.1 Lonjsko Polje (Croatia)

#### OPG Grgić

OPG Grgić is a family business producing honey in the Lonjsko Polje area. Through Nature Returns, the business aimed to expand its educational activities by developing an open-air educational park focused on bees, pollinators, biodiversity, and sustainable practices, while also increasing the visibility and commercial reach of its honey products.

Connectology supported the entrepreneur through monthly follow-up meetings and strategic mentoring sessions focused on both the commercial and educational dimensions of the initiative. Support included guidance on expanding sales channels, identifying partnership opportunities with complementary businesses, strengthening the project's marketing strategy, and improving the structure and promotion of the educational programme.

As a result of the mentoring process, the business expanded its commercial visibility by exploring new sales channels and collaborative tourism and educational packages with other local businesses. With Connectology's support, the entrepreneur also redesigned the product labels and branding, strengthening the visual identity of the products and their connection to Lonjsko Polje Nature Park.

### 6.2 Pico Island Nature Park (Portugal)

#### Eco Desafíos / Impact.Az

The entrepreneurs are developing two complementary initiatives: the cultivation of mate plants as a sustainable agricultural alternative, and an ecohunting and nature management project

focused on controlling invasive goat populations to support biodiversity conservation and reduce ecological pressure on local ecosystems.

Connectology supported the entrepreneurs through regular communication and mentoring sessions focused on strengthening the business foundations of both initiatives, including guidance related to company setup, financial planning, cost optimisation, client identification, partnership development, and operational planning. Given the environmental and regulatory complexity associated with the invasive goat management initiative, additional guidance was provided regarding legal considerations, compliance, and alignment with conservation principles.

The mentoring process helped the entrepreneurs strengthen the financial and operational structure of both initiatives, particularly regarding cost management, business planning, and the development of sustainable operational models aligned with conservation objectives. The support also helped clarify the long-term strategic positioning of the projects within the local environmental and agricultural context.

### Sintrópico

These entrepreneurs aim to develop a consultancy initiative focused on ecosystem restoration, agroecology, and Nature-Based Solutions, providing technical support to farmers, landowners, entrepreneurs, and local stakeholders.

Throughout the mentoring process, Connectology provided strategic support focused on strengthening the consultancy's business structure, operational planning, client attraction strategy, partnership opportunities, and financial planning. Discussions also concentrated on how to ensure that the consultancy remained strongly aligned with environmental sustainability principles and the conservation objectives connected to the protected area.

As a result of the mentoring process, the entrepreneurs refined the positioning and practical application of the consultancy, strengthening its alignment with the needs of the protected area and local stakeholders. The support also helped clarify how the Nature Returns grant could be strategically used to strengthen the consultancy's operational development and long-term impact

### *Picochar*

The entrepreneur is working on an innovative circular-economy initiative to transform invasive plant species into biochar and biostimulants. The project aims to reduce ecological pressure from invasive species while creating sustainable products that improve soil health and agricultural productivity.

Throughout the mentoring process, Connectology provided strategic support related to business development, financial planning, cost reduction strategies, partnership opportunities, and long-term sustainability. Discussions also focused on refining the operational structure and positioning of the initiative.

During the mentoring phase, the entrepreneur significantly refined and evolved his original concept into a more structured circular-economy business focused on biochar production. Connectology supported this transition by facilitating strategic discussions, identifying relevant contacts and opportunities, and providing guidance on risk mitigation, cost reduction, and long-term business viability.

### **6.3 Príncipe Nature Park (São Tomé and Príncipe)**

#### *Captive Breeding of Red Snails*

The entrepreneur is developing a nature-based business initiative focused on breeding and commercialising the invasive red snail species, while also contributing to the conservation of the endemic giant snail species threatened by its presence through breeding and reintroduction efforts. The project combines biodiversity conservation objectives with the creation of a sustainable local food source and local economic opportunities linked to the responsible management of invasive species.

Connectology provided regular follow-up support and mentoring sessions focused on strengthening the business and operational structure of the initiative. Discussions concentrated on financial projections, client identification, required materials and equipment, and the practical organisation of the implementation process.

Through the mentoring process, the entrepreneur gained a stronger understanding of the practical and financial aspects involved in establishing and managing a business. Connectology also supported the structuring of the next implementation steps and facilitated connections with experts who provided additional technical guidance for the development of the initiative.

#### *Ecological Bricks*

The entrepreneurs are developing a sustainable construction initiative producing ecological bricks from locally sourced materials. The project aims to provide an environmentally friendly alternative to traditional construction materials, preventing timber and sand extraction for construction, while promoting more sustainable local housing solutions.

Mentoring focused mainly on business development, operational planning, and cost optimisation. The entrepreneurs received guidance on identifying and approaching potential customers, particularly construction sites and local building projects, as well as support related to equipment selection and financial planning.

As a result of the mentoring process, the entrepreneurs improved the financial feasibility and operational planning of the initiative through cost-reduction strategies, support in identifying appropriate equipment suppliers, and guidance on strengthening the commercial direction and customer outreach of the business.

### **6.4 Shar Mountain National Park (North Macedonia)**

#### *Viktorijan Hajts Dooel*

This family business initiative focuses on the production of wooden pellets through the use of wood waste collected in the Shar Mountain region. The project aims to provide a more environmentally friendly heating solution while reducing wood waste accumulation and supporting the environmental objectives of the National Park.

Connectology supported the entrepreneurs through mentoring focused on strengthening the initiative's business and operational structure, including guidance related to client relationships, financial sustainability, partnership building, and complementary business opportunities.

Discussions also explored possible future expansion opportunities and additional funding possibilities linked to environmental and carbon-related markets.

The mentoring process helped the entrepreneurs better structure the commercial and strategic dimensions of the business, particularly by encouraging the development of partnerships and the validation of market demand through written expressions of interest from potential clients. Additional support also helped broaden the entrepreneurs' understanding of future funding and expansion opportunities connected to their environmental business model.

### Mountain Experience LLC Skopje

The entrepreneur is developing a via ferrata climbing route and adventure tourism infrastructure within the National Park. The initiative includes the installation of a 150-metre climbing route which, once completed, will be handed over to the National Park for long-term public use and management.

Connectology supported the entrepreneur through mentoring focused on digitalisation, booking systems, marketing strategies, promotion, and partnership opportunities. Guidance was provided regarding booking and reservation software solutions suitable for adventure tourism operators, as well as recommendations linked to online visibility, social media presence, and collaboration with tourism stakeholders and adventure tourism platforms.

Through the mentoring process, the entrepreneur gained access to practical tools and resources related to digital booking systems, online reservations, and tourism platform integration. This support strengthened the project's operational planning and provided concrete solutions for improving the future customer experience and professional management of the activity.

### Summer School

This project focuses on the development of a nature-based summer school programme within Shar Mountain National Park. The initiative combines outdoor activities, environmental education, and experiential learning to promote biodiversity awareness, sustainable habits, and stronger connections between young participants and the natural environment.

Connectology supported the entrepreneurs in strengthening both the operational and business dimensions of the initiative through mentoring focused on financial planning, business structuring, marketing strategies, operational efficiency, and long-term sustainability. Guidance was also provided on reducing costs and expanding the programme beyond a seasonal activity.

The mentoring process helped the entrepreneurs significantly restructure and expand the business model beyond a summer-only activity. Through strategic guidance, the initiative developed additional activity formats and packages capable of accommodating more participants and creating stronger long-term sustainability, while also accelerating implementation and improving operational planning.

### Mountaineering Club Ljuboten - Tetovo

This initiative focuses on the sustainable cultivation of *Sideritis scardica*, commonly known as Shar Mountain tea. The project aims to contribute to the protection of this endemic and

endangered species by reducing pressure from illegal wild harvesting while promoting community-based environmental stewardship and sustainable local economic activity.

Throughout the mentoring process, Connectology supported the entrepreneurs in strengthening the business and strategic dimensions of the initiative. Mentoring sessions focused on encouraging a stronger entrepreneurial approach, defining clearer implementation steps, exploring future sales channels and pricing strategies, and strengthening the project's financial sustainability.

As a result of the mentoring process, the entrepreneurs progressively developed a stronger entrepreneurial mindset and a clearer understanding of how to structure and sustain a viable nature-positive business. The support strengthened their confidence in areas such as financial planning, pricing, customer acquisition, and long-term business sustainability, allowing the initiative to evolve into a more structured economic activity linked to conservation.

### Nature Nomads

Nature Nomads is developing a unified digital platform aimed at promoting eco-tourism in the Sharr Mountains. The platform integrates interactive trail maps, accommodation and rental bookings, guided tours, and multimedia storytelling to connect visitors with local businesses and tourism experiences in the region while increasing the visibility of the protected area.

Mentoring focused mainly on business strategy, client acquisition, pricing approaches, partnerships, and long-term platform sustainability. Connectology supported the entrepreneurs by sharing resources related to user engagement, behavioural approaches to attracting and retaining clients, and examples of similar digital business models. The entrepreneurs were also encouraged to intensify outreach efforts and strengthen collaborations with tourism operators and local stakeholders.

Through the mentoring process, the entrepreneurs gained practical strategic recommendations related to platform positioning, partnerships, client acquisition, and long-term scalability. The support also helped strengthen the long-term vision of the initiative and identify additional opportunities for visibility, collaboration, and future growth.

## **6.5. Ulcinj Salina Nature Park (Montenegro)**

### Saltworks Nature Point

This initiative aims to establish a low-impact camper area connected to the revitalisation of the Ulcinj Salina Nature Park. The project combines sustainable tourism, visibility for protected areas, and support for local economic activity through carefully managed infrastructure integrated into the natural environment.

The project faced several legal and institutional challenges related to permits, governance structures, and operational models within the protected area. Mentoring focused on helping the entrepreneur navigate the evolving institutional landscape, assess possible operational models, and maintain the long-term viability of the project despite the uncertainty surrounding implementation conditions.

Although the administrative situation slowed implementation, the mentoring process helped the entrepreneur better understand possible operational and financing models for the project

and identify additional funding opportunities beyond Nature Returns. Connectology also supported the development of the project's digital presence and communication strategy, allowing the entrepreneur to continue strengthening the business structure and market positioning while awaiting legal clarification.

### *FlamingoRide*

FlamingoRide is a sustainable mobility initiative designed to improve visitors' access to and experience within the Ulcinj Salina Nature Park through the use of electric scooters adapted to natural terrain. In addition to scooter rentals, the project also plans to offer guided eco-tours, educational experiences, and complementary services connected to the protected area.

Mentoring focused on operational planning, business development, partnerships, and the practical implementation of the mobility concept within the protected area framework. Connectology connected the entrepreneur with alumni from its wide startup network in order to facilitate exchanges of experience, advice, and potential collaboration opportunities.

Through these connections and mentoring sessions, the entrepreneur established valuable partnerships and gained practical knowledge related to electric scooter operations, safety considerations, and business development. This support strengthened the operational planning of the project and helped further validate the business model.

### *Reborn by Adventures*

Reborn by Adventures is an already established sustainable tourism company. Through the Nature Returns programme, the entrepreneurs aimed to expand their activities within the Ulcinj Salina Nature Park by offering cycling and walking tours, birdwatching experiences, and educational nature-based activities designed to promote the area, attract visitors, raise environmental awareness, and support local economic activity.

Connectology's support focused primarily on strengthening and refining the existing business model through mentoring sessions related to business and marketing strategy, pricing approaches, customer experience, sustainable growth opportunities, and operational development. Additional guidance was provided regarding online visibility, partnerships, equipment selection, and client attraction strategies.

The mentoring process contributed to strengthening the company's operational and commercial strategy, and during the support period, the entrepreneurs secured their first bookings for a tour within the Ulcinj Salina area, demonstrating early market interest and helping validate the expansion of their activities connected to the protected area.

Overall, the post-selection support phase demonstrated that financial assistance alone is not sufficient to ensure the success of early-stage nature-positive ventures. Continuous mentoring, tailored guidance, practical problem-solving, and strong stakeholder collaboration proved essential for transforming promising ideas into more resilient, implementation-ready businesses capable of contributing to both biodiversity conservation and sustainable local economic development.

## 7) Lessons Learned

As a multi-country pilot implemented across highly diverse ecosystems and entrepreneurial environments, Nature Returns generated important lessons for future replication and scaling.

- **Tailored outreach is essential:** Different pilot areas required different communication and engagement strategies to attract strong applicants. Combining online communication with direct local engagement proved most effective.
- **Practical training generates stronger outcomes:** Entrepreneurs responded best to highly practical content, particularly:
  - Pitching and communication;
  - Marketing and customer development;
  - Business model validation;
  - Legal and administrative guidance; and
  - Founder case studies.
- **Targeted mentoring is critical:** Ongoing mentoring and follow-up support significantly improved implementation readiness and helped entrepreneurs navigate operational challenges.
- **Local-language delivery improves participation:** Although English was initially expected to be sufficient in some locations, local-language facilitation greatly improved engagement and interaction.
- **Field visits strengthen conservation alignment:** Visits to the protected areas helped entrepreneurs better understand ecological realities and align their ventures with conservation priorities.

## 8) Feedback from the entrepreneurs

Feedback received from participating entrepreneurs was overwhelmingly positive across all pilot sites, with founders consistently highlighting the value of the mentoring process, practical guidance, responsiveness of the support team, and the personalised approach implemented throughout the programme.

Examples of feedback received include:

*“Your guidance and assistance have been truly valuable for us throughout this process.”*

*“It was a pleasure to work with Ana and the Connectology team, and I truly appreciate the guidance, mentoring, and availability throughout the process. The support was very useful for further developing my idea and thinking through the next steps.”*

*“Overall, everything was very good, and I have only positive feedback.”*

*“This phase was a very important and useful experience for me. Vladyslav and Tatiana were very correct, supportive, and dedicated to us in every aspect. The mentoring from Ana was also very important. For me personally, it was very helpful—like a sports person who needs a coach to guide them and help improve their weak points.”*

Overall, the feedback confirmed that the combination of tailored mentoring, practical business support, regular communication, and strong personal engagement significantly strengthened the experience of participating entrepreneurs and increased the perceived value and impact of the Nature Returns programme.

## 9) Conclusion

The Nature Returns initiative has demonstrated that protected areas can become platforms for entrepreneurship, innovation, and local economic resilience when supported through structured and adaptive programmes.

By combining conservation priorities with entrepreneurship support, the project successfully mobilised local stakeholders to co-create solutions that generate both environmental and socio-economic value. Across five pilot sites, Nature Returns strengthened local ownership of conservation challenges, supported implementation-ready ventures, and developed a practical model for conservation-driven entrepreneurship that can be replicated in other protected areas globally.

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# Annex - Photos

**1**

Principe Nature Park Academy for entrepreneurs

**2**

Shar Mountain National Park Academy for entrepreneurs

**3**

Ulcinj Salina Nature Park Academy for entrepreneurs

**4**

Workshop for entrepreneurs



## A1 Principe Nature Park Academy for entrepreneurs



Group photo of invited entrepreneurs at the Nature Returns Principe Academy for Entrepreneurs, taken after the closing of the event, on 8 May 2025.

## A2 Shar Mountain National Park Academy for entrepreneurs



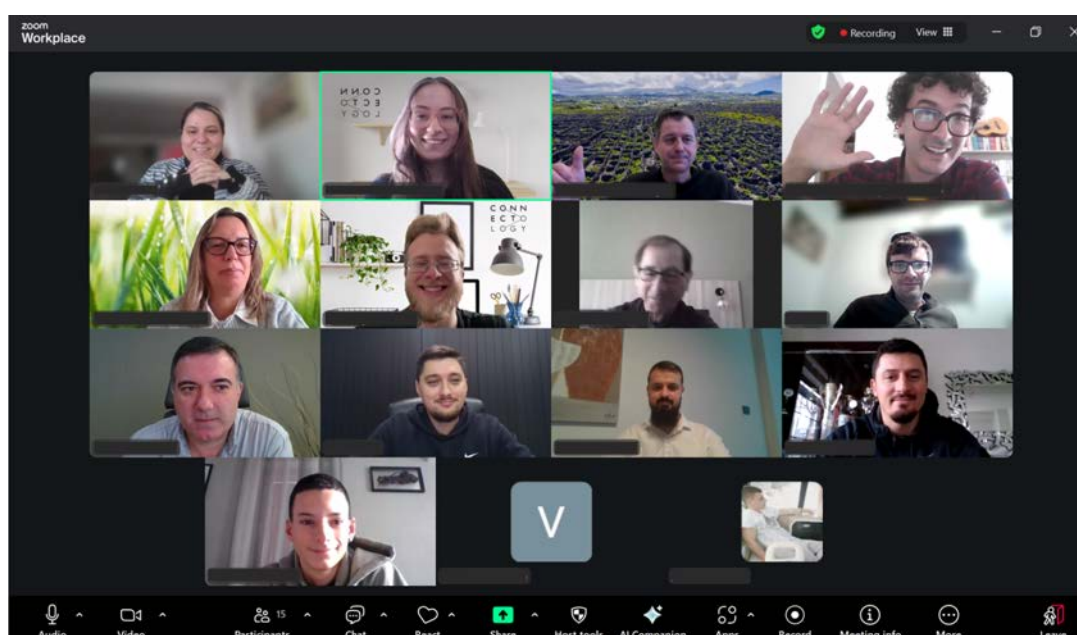
Photo taken during the session "Validating your Business Idea: Startup Clinic" in Tetovo, North Macedonia, on 23 September 2025.

## A3 Ulcinj Salina Nature Park Academy for entrepreneurs



*Photo taken during the “Nature Area Visit and Introduction of Startups and their Business Proposals” session in Ulcinj Salina, on 28 October 2025.*

## A4 Workshop for entrepreneurs



*Photo taken during the “Marketing Essentials for Small Businesses” Workshop on 18 December 2025.*

*The Nature Returns initiative has demonstrated that protected areas can become platforms for entrepreneurship, innovation, and local economic resilience when supported through structured and adaptive programmes. Following a competitive selection process, 15 ventures demonstrated strong potential to deliver both conservation and socio-economic impact. As a result, they were awarded grant funding through Nature Returns and received tailored business development support from Connectology. These ventures are now taking off for the benefit of the five protected areas, and the findings from this process are available in Connectology's report.*

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