

SCIENTISTS

for Balkan Rivers

NETWORK INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Scientists for Balkan Rivers Network. This network is organized within the frame of the **Save the Blue Heart of Europe** campaign and was launched during the first online network meeting in January 2022. Through this guide, we would like to share with you the initial vision of this network and its current structure – so that you can learn how to participate. We are very open to suggestions and are curious to see how this network continues to grow!

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NETWORK VISION

Balkan rivers are unique and largely untouched ecosystems, but little is known about them. Alarming, they are threatened by 3,500 hydropower projects. Scientific data are needed to better understand these pristine ecosystems and to provide evidence for legal fights to preserve these valuable rivers. In order to address the current data deficiencies across Balkan rivers, we are building a network of scientists who actively focus their research on the Balkan region with the aim to collect scientific data. **The scientists in the network not only lend their own data but also use their independent voices to advocate for the protection of rivers.** Together, we are in search of senior partners and young motivated scientists, ready to contribute scientific expertise, tools, work-power, and data collection methods – all to keep the Balkan rivers wild and free.

By participating, you have the benefit of meeting fellow scientists with shared values, who work in related study fields. This can lead to **valuable collaborations and knowledge exchange**, as well as to **innovative research** ideas that focus on a larger geographical scale. For early career scientists such collaboration can be a true career boost.

Not registered to the network yet? Please do so by filling in [this form](#).

NETWORK ORIGIN

The will to unite scientists who support the fight for Balkan Rivers has been growing over the years. Researchers combined their efforts around the Vjosa River in Albania, advocating for a Vjosa Wild River National Park. Contemporarily, many others conducted valuable studies that showed the uniqueness of the Balkan River systems. Students gather yearly during the Students for Rivers Camps from the River Collective and simultaneously, researchers have been pitching new ways to collaborate on the Balkan scale, naming it grassroots ecology.

All these experiences now come together in this network which is supported through the **Save the Blue Heart of Europe** campaign. It becomes an important pillar in this campaign that has been running for over 10 years. Other important pillars are a network of Lawyers for Balkan Rivers and a network of Artists for Balkan Rivers.

Grassroots Ecology

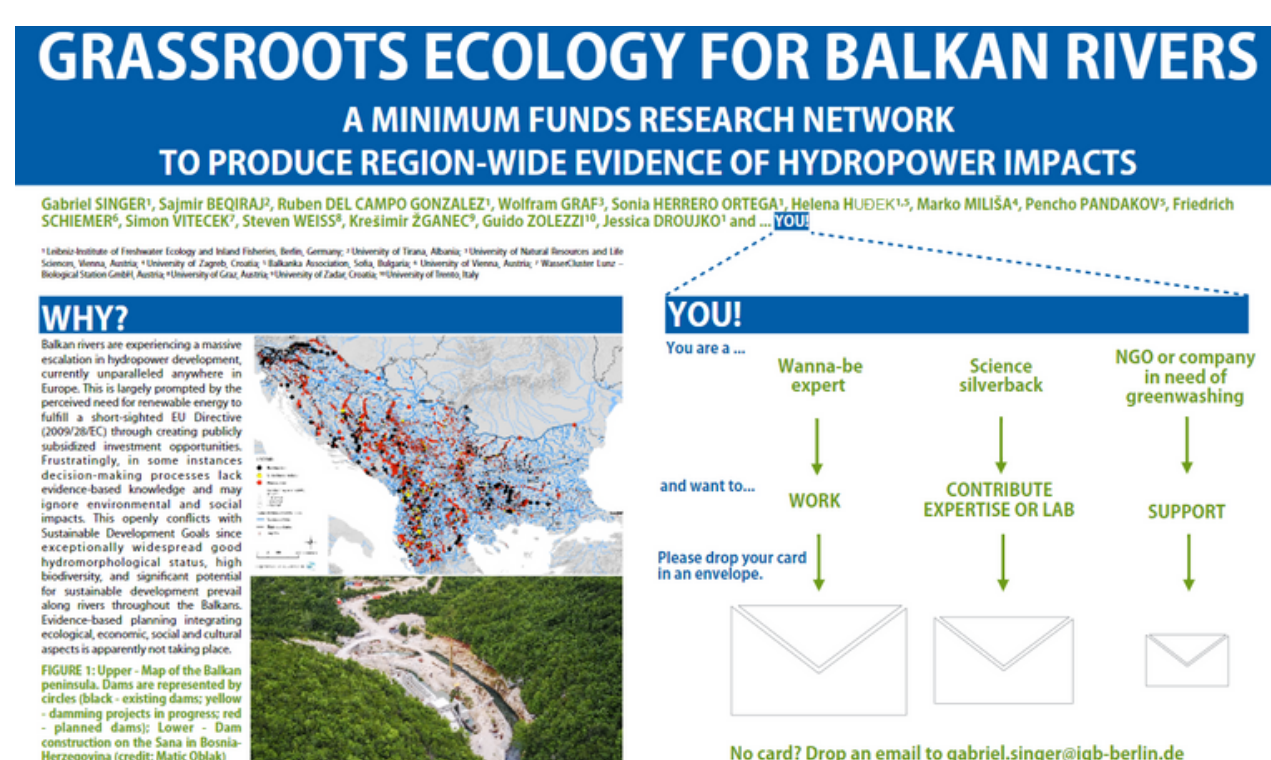
Check out [this poster](#) to read about the collaborative network pitched during the SEFS meeting in Zagreb 2019.

Save the Blue Heart of Europe

Learn more about [this campaign](#), through which this network is now gaining momentum.

River Collective

Check out [the River Collective](#) to learn how students turn their knowledge into action.



VJOSA MODEL

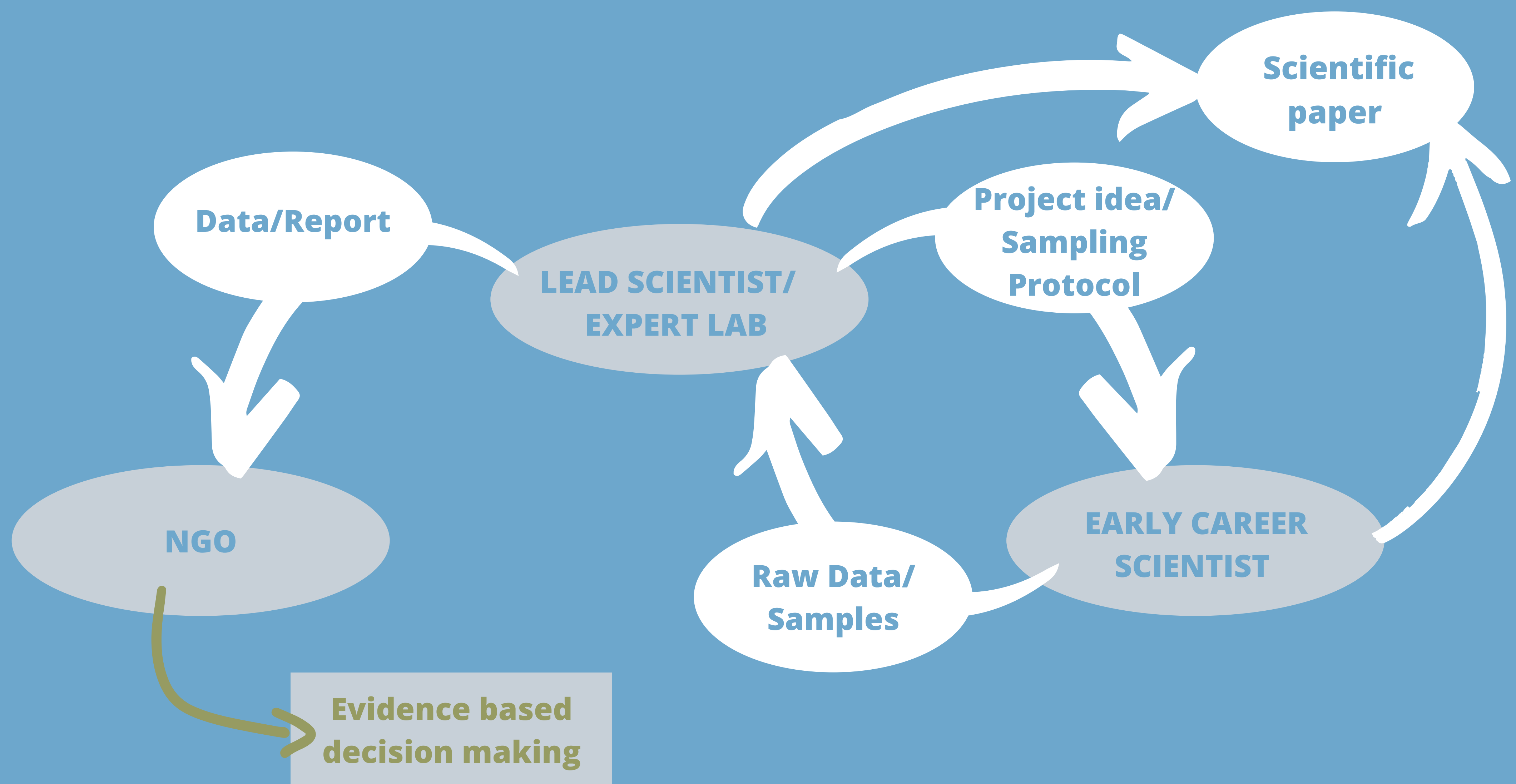
A big motivation for the initiation of the Scientists for Balkan Rivers Network is the proven success of the “Scientists for Vjosa” group. The Vjosa model consists of four pillars: **1) Dedication and stamina:** A group of dedicated scientists from Albania and abroad research and advocate for the Vjosa and its tributaries jointly for a long period of time. **2) Science weeks:** In 2017 and 2021 a large group of scientists from many disciplines spent a week in the field to collect data. The results were summarized in reports. During these weeks, the scientists were accompanied by international and national media representatives and film teams. **3) Research Center:** A Vjosa Research Center was established in Tepelena right next to the Vjosa. This house functions as a science hub in the region and offers accommodation and working facilities for students and senior scientists. **4) Advocacy:** The scientists for the Vjosa not only collect data, but also raise their voice so that their position is heard. They promote their findings and recommendations to the public and political decision makers.

The Scientists for Vjosa hugely contributed to successfully fending off planned hydropower projects on the main river and to increasing the chances of this river becoming the first Wild River National Park of Europe.



COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

With a growing network of scientists across the Balkans, we believe it is possible to produce high-quality science with minimum means by collaboratively gathering data at an unparalleled, sub-continental scale. We welcome campaigns collecting data based on protocols that can be executed by fellow scientists. Network participants can also contribute by analyzing data, potentially resulting in a collaborative paper. With such work, senior scientists can take societal responsibility by pinpointing destructive impact and promoting conservation, while meaningfully fostering careers of young engaged colleagues. The figure below graphically explains the possible collaboration structure.




CALL FOR LEAD SCIENTISTS

Are you planning on doing research focused on, or related to, Balkan Rivers? We would love to hear from you! Whether you are a senior scientist leading a large project, a PhD student planning for their dissertation, or a Master or Bachelor student planning their thesis – we consider you a lead scientist.

We encourage you to think about the benefits of collaborating with a regional network that could help with data collection even when you are not in the field. No matter which stage of planning you are in, let us know what you are thinking of, so we can share it with others in the network and connections can be initiated.

You can do so by filling in [this google form](#). Your research will then be added to [this overview](#).



Lead Scientist - Application

Dear lead scientist,

Thank you for your interest in researching the Balkan Rivers. Through this form, you can share a project you are planning to lead and how the network can be of help to you. We will share this information with interested network members and coordinate a time to meet up during one of the network's online events.

Please fill this form in with the information you have as best as you can! (5 - 10 minutes)

scientistsforbalkanrivers@gmail.com

Switch account

* Required

Email *

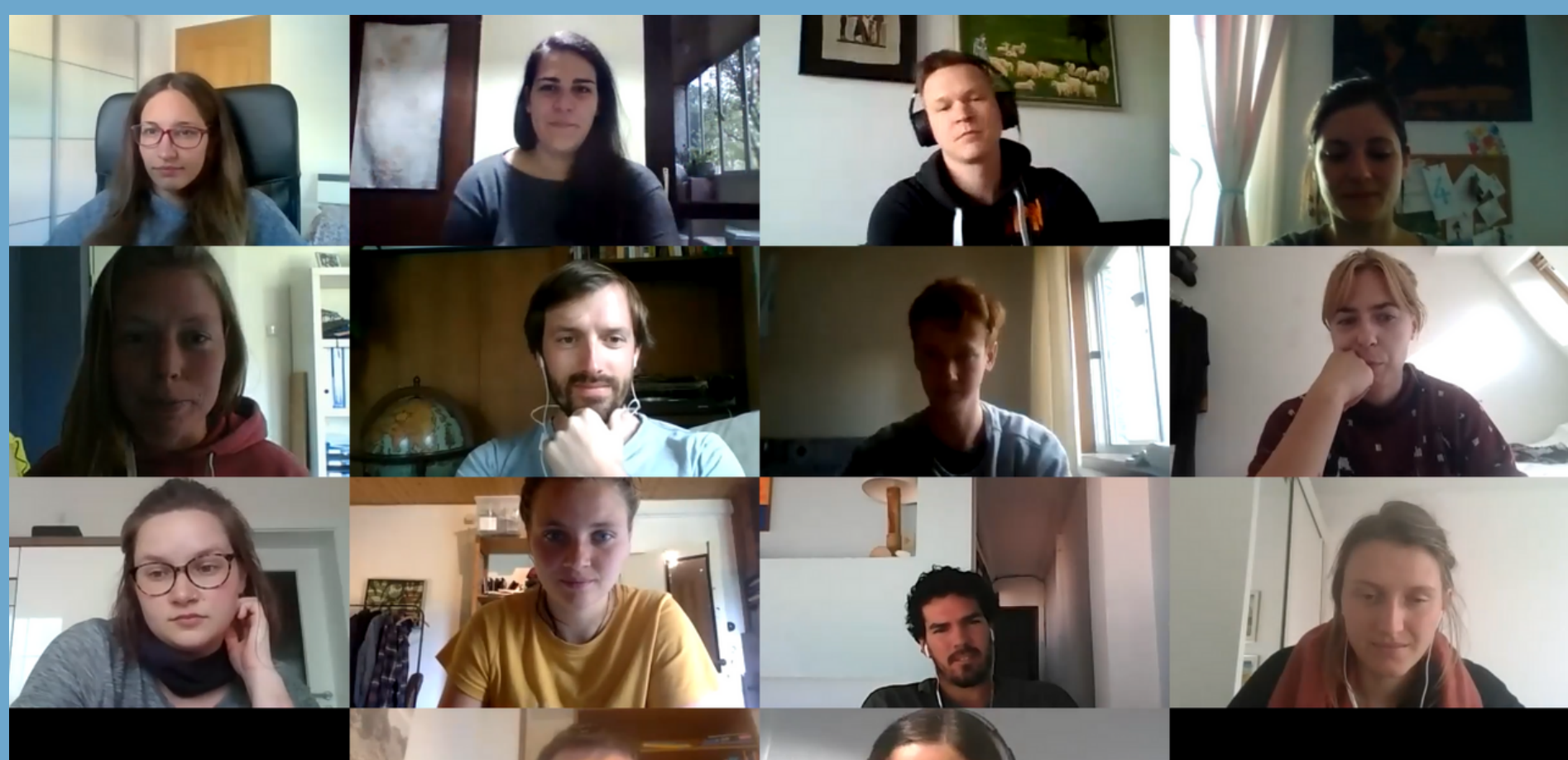
Your email

NETWORK ACTIVITIES

The network is currently structured around two main activities: the online network meet-ups and the Neretva Science Week. The Neretva Science Week is limited in capacity, but we invite everyone to connect during online meet-ups! We also encouraged joint fieldwork and are excited to see such campaigns take shape.

Online Meet-ups

Every last Tuesday of the month we gather online to brainstorm, discuss research, and update each other on network activities and news. At every meet-up several lead scientists will briefly present their work, after which there is time to give input and discuss their ideas. You will receive an invitation for each of these meet-ups, or you find the link in Slack (more info on slack [here](#)).



Neretva Science Week

From June 28 to July 3 2022 several scientists from the Scientists for Balkan Rivers Network will meet at the Neretva River in Bosnia and Herzegovina to collect ecological data (e.g. biodiversity and hydromorphology). This science week follows the model of the Vjosa Science Week, of which you can see [a video](#) below. Unfortunately, the capacity for this week is limited, but similar events will happen in the future!



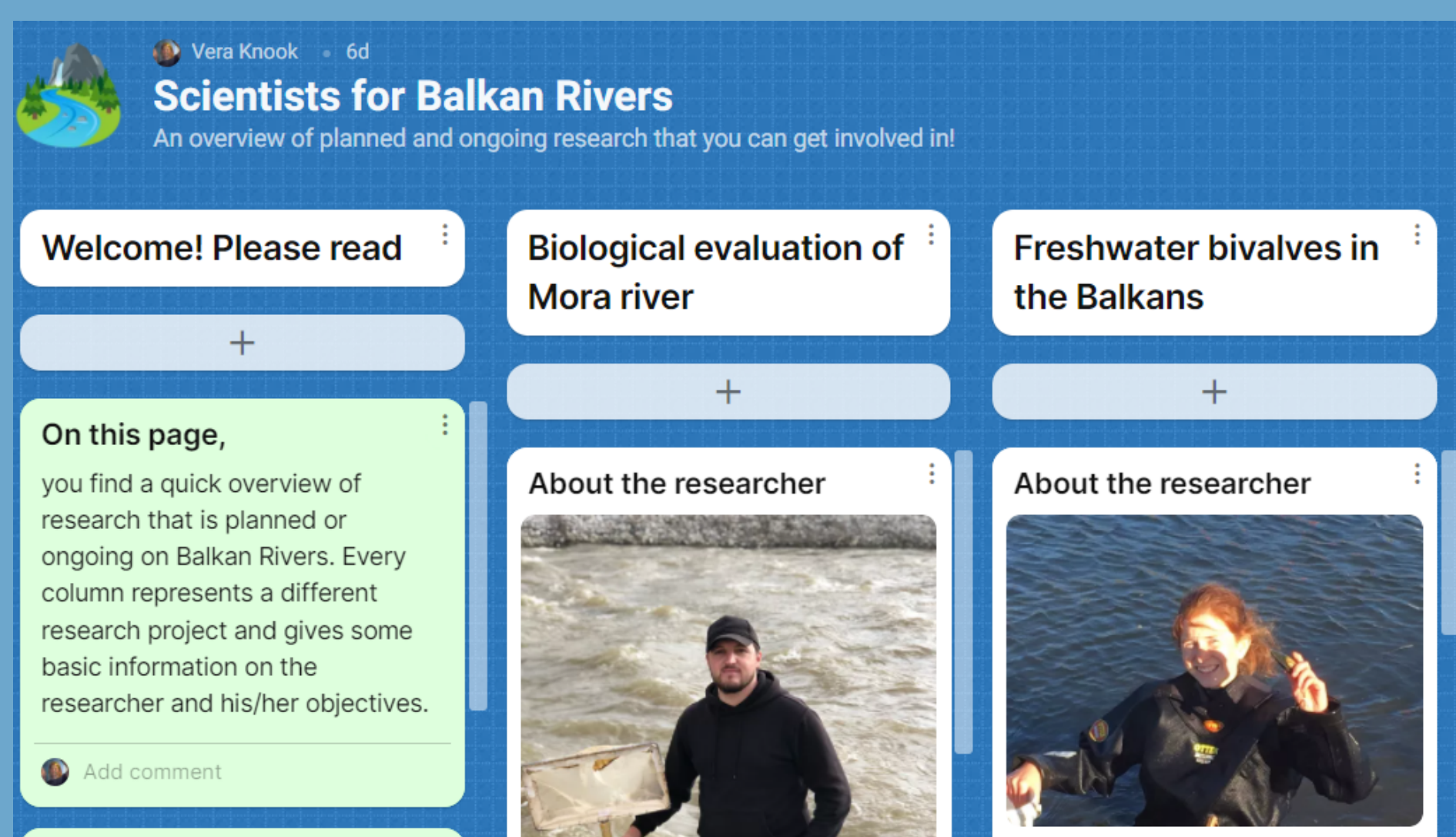
PLATFORM

To grow as a network, it is essential that we can connect with each other to exchange ideas, brainstorm about new research projects, and find new potential collaborators. To make such connections possible, we have established a communication platform on slack as well as a research overview on padlet.

Ongoing Research

We keep an overview of all submitted research on [this padlet](#) accessible to the public. Feel free to scroll through and get excited!

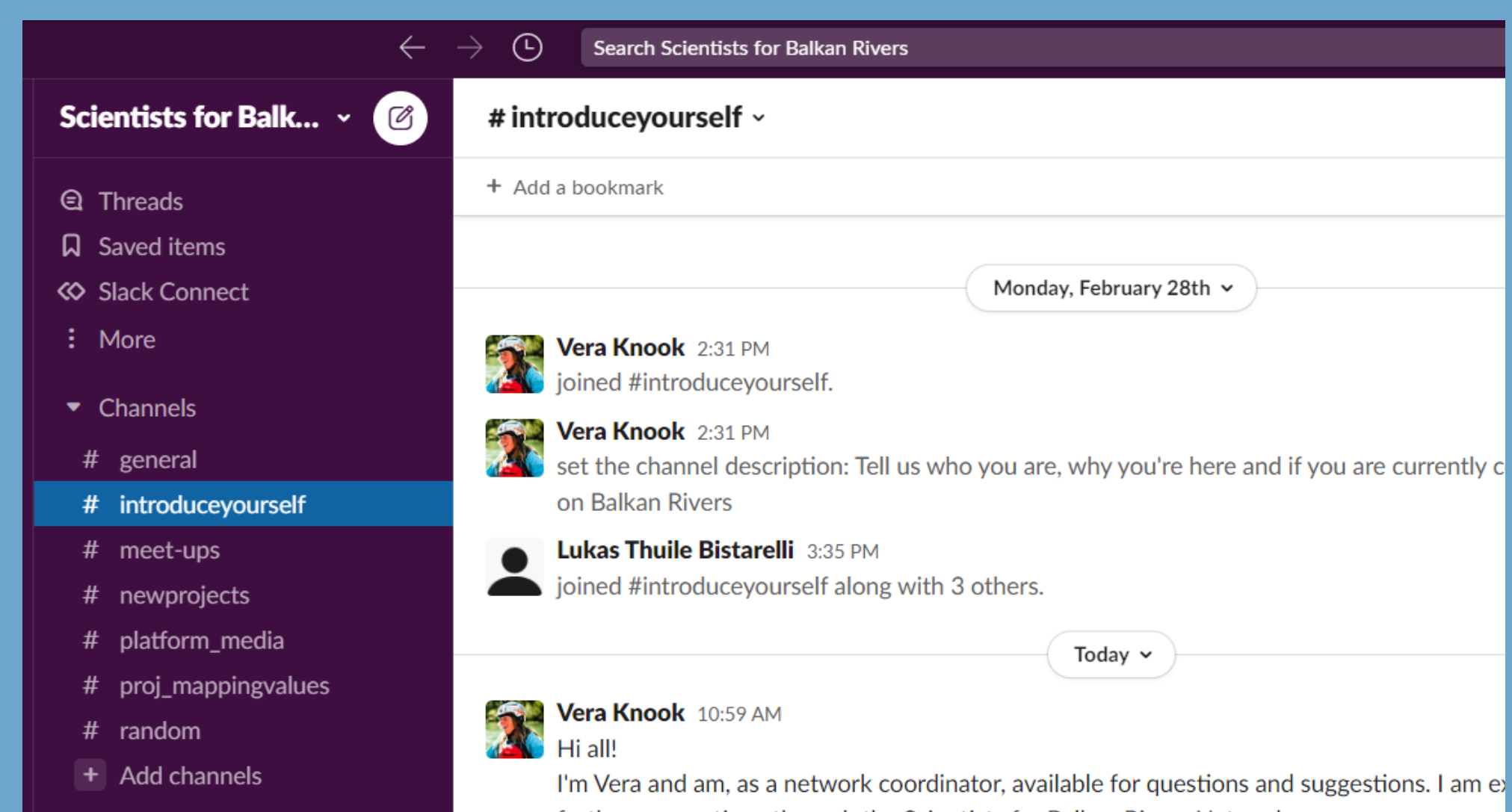
Do you want your research to be displayed, then head to page 7 to read the call for lead scientists and submit your research!



Communication

We opted to create a workspace on slack, a communication tool where it is easy to connect and follow conversations on the topics you are interested in, as well as to contribute to specific research ideas.

Once you join sign up for the network, you will receive information on how to join this workspace.



RIVERS AT RISK

With 3.500 planned hydropower dams in the Balkan region, scientific research could be beneficial everywhere. We, therefore, provide you with a list of rivers and river stretches where your work would be needed the most on the Balkans, in order to collect data for the fight against dam projects. This list is based on the rivers that the Lawyers for Balkan Rivers network are currently trying to defend legally. The list below was compiled at the moment of writing this guide. [You find an updated list here](#) (also available on slack where you can add suggestions).

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- Bistrica (tributary of Drina near Foca)
- Upper Neretva + Neretva until Konjic
- Buna
- Neretvica
- Ljuta + Vrhovinska (tributaries of Upper Neretva)
- Drina (from Foca upstream to border with ME)

Albania

- Vjosa
- Shushica
- Bence

Serbia

- Rivers (mostly streams) around the town of Kraljevo
- Morava river (near Cicevac)

CONTACT

Thank you for your interest in the Scientists for Balkan Rivers Network. We hope you are excited to start collaborating with other network participants and look forward to welcoming you into the network soon. You can sign up [here](#)! If you have any questions or suggestions, feel free to get in touch through the slack workspace or by sending an email to scientists@balkanrivers.net.