

Joint ESENIAS and DIAS Scientific Conference and 10th ESENIAS Workshop

Ten years of cooperation and networking on invasive alien species in East and South Europe

07–09 December 2021

Opening Statement

By Teodora Trichkova

**Chairman,
Distinguished Colleagues and Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure to welcome you and express my gratitude for your presence at the Joint ESENIAS and DIAS Scientific Conference and the 10th ESENIAS Workshop!

Our forum today is dedicated to a remarkable anniversary that gave the title of our conference, i. e. *Ten Years of Cooperation and Networking on Invasive Alien Species in East and South Europe*.

The conference is organised jointly by several organisations, and we appreciate very much their support. As you know the ESENIAS & DIAS conferences are without registration fee and the organisers fully support these events. So I would like to mention them all :

- General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Turkey
- East and South European Network for Invasive Alien Species (ESENIAS)
- Danube Region Invasive Alien Species Network (DIAS)
- The Mediterranean Fisheries Research, Production and Training Institute, In Demre, Antalya
- The Faculty of Agriculture, at Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University
- Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, in Sofia
- Faculty of Science, at Hacettepe University, in Ankara
- Association for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (SUEkos), Turkey
- The European Weed Research Society (EWRS) Invasive Plants Working Group.

Allow me to thank the honourable Chair Dr. Mustafa Altuğ Atalay and the Co-Chairs Mr. Mahir Kanyılmaz and Prof. Ahmet Uludağ for their leadership and to the Organising and Scientific Committees for their dedicated work. Special thanks to my colleague Dr Hristina Kalcheva who was online day and night during the last weeks responding to emails and collecting and listing the communications!

We all realize that much has changed since we met in 2019 in Ohrid. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that any biotic factor can change all the world, habits and lifestyle for very short time. The decreased movement of humans and goods, use of resources, and destroying the nature, has not decreased the role of IAS on biodiversity. In addition, new catastrophic and extreme weather events have been registered in Europe recently, such as forest fires, floods, and the mucilage problems in the Sea of Marmara, which are due to climate change and IAS. The changed climatic conditions may also lead to shifts in disease vectors and their release from natural controls, thus, increasing the potential for emergence of new diseases.

A core part of the European Green Deal, the EU Biodiversity Strategy aims to put Europe's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030 and build our societies' resilience to future threats, including climate change impacts, forest fires, and disease outbreaks. The Strategy calls for management of established IAS and decrease the number of Red List species they threaten by 50%. Achieving this key commitment of the EU Nature Restoration Plan requires a complexity of scientific work, innovative solutions and implementation measures.

Over the coming days we are looking forward to the presentations, insights and guidance in several areas:

1. Invasive alien species traits and trends
2. Vectors and pathways for invasive alien species introductions
3. The Danube River as invasive alien species corridor
4. Invasive alien species impact
5. Invasive alien species prevention and management, and
6. Management and sharing of IAS data.

This anniversary conference is another opportunity to:

- Update on the current ESENIAS and DIAS project activities and outcomes
- Exchange information on other IAS-related initiatives, and
- Enhance cooperation and networking among scientists in the ESENIAS and DIAS countries and with other networks, organisations and projects.

I wish you a very successful Conference and Workshop!

Thank you for your attention!