

Workshop on Natura 2000 Management

Threats, Challenges and Solutions

With a specific focus on management of forest and grassland habitats in the Alpine biogeographic region

The state of play of Natura 2000 management and financing in Bulgaria

prepared by Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation

Please answer the following questions regarding recent developments of Natura 2000 in your country.

1. Last development of the establishment of Natura 2000:

- **are there any changes in the Natura 2000 coverage in the last years;**

The first list of Bulgarian Natura 2000 sites was submitted to EC in the spring of 2007 following Decision 122/02.03.2007 of the Council of the Ministers. The first list included 88 SPA (11,3 % of the country) and 180 pSCIs (13,3 % of the country) – total 18,2 % of the country. The list was assessed as insufficient by EC and Bulgaria was requested to submit more sites. With Decision 668/16.10.2007 the Council of Ministers added 27 new pSCIs. With Decision 802/18.12.2007 were added another 26 SPAs and 21 pSCI. These decisions were amended with Decision 52/28.2.2008 and again submitted to EC. The final official state proposal included 228 pSCIs covering 29,5 % of Bulgaria and 114 SPAs covering 20,3 % of Bulgaria - total of 33,89 % of territory of the country. The Bulgarian pSCIs are situated in the Continental, Alpine and Black Sea biogeographical regions.

BSPB/BirdLife Bulgaria submitted a complain to the EC because significant territories of a few IBAs (Rila, Pirin, Lomovete, Kaliakra, Western Rhodopes, Central Balkan) were not included in the borders of the proposed SPAs because of economic reasons.

The biogeographical seminars for Bulgaria and Romania were held on 8-12 June 2008 in Sibiu, Romaina. The seminar accepted the proposed pSCI and requested Bulgaria to submit till October 2010 additional pSCI in order to solve the identified gaps.

EC officially approved on 12.12.2008 the lists of the Bulgarian SCI which were presented on the biogeographical seminar. They were published in the Official Journal on 13.02.2009 (decisions of EC 2009/91, 2009/92, 2009/93)

Bulgarian Natura 2000 network was enlarged with Decisions of the Council of Ministers #811/16.11.2010 and #335/26.5.2011. New sites were proposed and the territories of a few existing sites was enlarged. EC officially approved on 16.11.2012 the proposed new pSCI and the amendments of the existing SCIs. They were published in the Official Journal of EU on 26.01.2013.

The total number of the SPA reached **118**, and the number of SCIs reached **231**. The borders of 13 SPAs and SCIs fully overlap. The total surface of Natura 2000 reached **34,3** % of the Bulgarian territory.

A proposal for declaration of 3 new marine sites and enlargement of 6 existing marine sites passed through the National Council for Biodiversity at the Ministry of Environment and Waters on 04.12.2012 but was not discussed till now at the Council of Ministers.

The last stage of the designation process is the publication of the orders for the declaration of the Natura 2000 sites (SPA and SAC) in the Bulgarian State Gazette. According to the Bulgarian Biodiversity Act the order include the name of the site and its localization, the habitats and species which are object of protection, goals of its declaration, the included cadastral items or coordinate register of its borders, regimes of the site.

The time frame for issuing of the official orders for NATURA 2000 sites according to the Bulgarian Biodiversity Act was 1 year after their approval by Government for SPAs (it was 12.02.2009 for the first sites and 26.05.2012 for the last sites) and 2 years after approval by EC for the SCIs (13.02.2011). After amendment of the Biodiversity Act in 2010 the time frame was enlarged to 4 years for SCIs. The deadline for the first 228 SAC became 13.02.2013. This deadline was not achieved and the time frame was enlarged to 6 years with amendment of the Biodiversity Act in 2013.

There were 116 published orders for SPAs till 10.09.2013. There is no published order for SAC till 10.09.2013.

- **do you expect any changes in the next few years;**

We expect finishing the procedure for the marine Natura 2000 sites, decision about Rila Bufer SCI and decision about the frozen sites proposed by different NGOs.

The habitat mapping project discovered that many localities of the European Soslits and Hamsters are outside Natura 2000. It is not known if they will be proposed as pSCI.

- **do you consider that the network is complete;**

The Network can be considered as complete on 90-95%.

- **Any ideas for CEEweb support and activities in this field?**

Partnership, networking, support for elaboration of statements and positions, etc. to foster BG government to finalize the process of issuing the official orders for SAC in Bulgaria. In addition, it would be useful to exchange experience with other EU countries the process.

2. SAC designation process:

- **how many SCI till now;**

231 SCIs covering 30 % of territory,

- **how many SAC declared.**

Zero

- **any ideas for CEEweb support and activities in this field?**

Possible projects for knowledge and experience exchange.

3. Management plan development:

- **how many management plans started to be developed;**

The following management plans for SCIs have been developed so far - "Lomovete", "Shumensko plato", "Pojarevo-Garvan", "Bulgarka" and "Pomoriisko ezero". All of them were initiated by NGOs:

Ministry of Environment started procedures to develop management plans for the next SPA: "Ponor", "Besaparski ridove", "Kocherinovo", "Meshtitsa", "Berkovitsa", "Orizishta Tsalapitsa", "Yazovir Ovcharitsa", "Yazovir Jrebchevo", "Yazovir Konush". They should be finalized in the next years.

- **how many plans are ready;**

Zero. The management plans of "Shumensko plato" and "Lomovete" were submitted officially to MOEW, but till now no MP is officialy adopted.

- **any templates for management plans;**

There is an official template which was approved with an ordinance of the Ministry of Environment and Waters

- **any ideas for CEEweb support and activities in this field?**

It is possible to establish partnerships with NGOs for development of management plans of Natura 2000 sites and elaborate joint project proposals, as well.

4. Habitat action plans:

- **are there any Habitat action plans developed;**

No

- **any ideas for CEEweb support and activities in this field?**

Creating partnerships with NGOs and networking, developing joint project proposals and exchange of know-how and experience.

5. Biogeographic process:

- **how many biogeographic regions are there in your country;**

Three – Alpine, Continental and Black Sea

- **how active is the national participation in the Alpine region;**

Bulgaria was presented by one participant from Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation as NGO representative and one participant from Ministry of Environment and Waters. Information for the report was submitted on two habitats. Bulgaria is not active. There is lack of human capacity and financial resources. There are no corresponding institutions to coordinate the participation of Bulgaria in biogeographic seminars.

- **do you plan to participate in process for the Continental region;**

It is essential for Bulgaria to participate in process for the Continental region, but there are obstacles, such as lack of human capacity and financing. Furthermore, as mentioned above the lack of institutionalization on this issue hinders the participation of BG in biogeographic seminars.

- **any ideas for CEEweb support and activities in this field?**

Exchange of experience and information between CEE partners is very much needed. It is essential to ensure human and financial resources for active involvement and effective work.

6. Priority Action Frameworks:

- **level of development;**

Second draft is in a process of development.

- **main achievements;**

Difficult to mention

- **key problems;**

Inadequate consultative process due to a very short timeframe. In addition to this, the development of PAF has started later and no consultation between the planning processes with the other programs has taken place.

The responsible national authority for PAF (MOEW) has hired a consulting company to develop PAF.

The template that has been developed is complicated and confusing.

There is a focus only on species from Habitat and Bird Directive without to include other priority species. No detailed investigations on site, species and habitat levels. It will be difficult to defend the requested money.

- **any ideas for CEEweb support and activities in this field?**

The exchange of information is very important. Sharing best and worst experience from the different member states.

7. Reporting on article 12 and 17:

- **how is the reporting process organized;**

A consortium between BSPB/BirdLife Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research is responsible for the preparation of the report on article 12. The report will be submitted till the end of the year.

The preparation of the report on article 17 is entrusted on the company Dikon which has also won the projects for habitat mapping in Bulgaria and the development of PAF. The report will be submitted with unknown delay.

- **any comments on the quality of the reports;**

Till this moment there is no final publicly available information (report). We expect that the first report prepared by BirdLife Bulgaria and IBER will be with the best possible quality for Bulgarian standards.

We could evaluate the quality of the report produced by Dikon after its official presentation.

- **any ideas for CEEweb support and activities in this field?**

Sharing best and worst experience from the different member states.

8. Wilderness and non-intervention management:

- **are there any Natura 2000 sites which can fall into the wilderness concept;**

The concept of wilderness, in legal conservation terms can be directly translated to all IUCN protected area categories 1a and 1b in Bulgaria. However, wilderness is a wider concept than protected areas and it equally embraces any “back-country” (undeveloped) zones of other protected area categories (e.g. Bulgarian national parks, category II, Bulgarian Nature Parks) or non-protected areas with sufficiently preserved natural characteristics (such as closed basins and inaccessible forests (“closed basins” are situated on hard-to-access localities, in the vicinity to the state frontier or on very steep terrains)).

- **is the concept present in national forestry guidance / regulations;**

In forestry national guidance/regulations the concept of wilderness is not presented at all. From one side almost all human activities are forbidden in the reserves and the level of the forestry activities in the National parks is very low. Also according the Guidelines for management of productive forests in Natura 2000 there is a requirement to protect at least 10% of the habitat as unmanaged old-growth forests. But from other side the Guidelines for management of forests in Natura 2000 is not official legislative document and it enters in some contradictions with other forest related legislation. The legislative restrictions on the forestry activities inside the National and Nature parks do not promote the wilderness concept and are weakly implemented.

- **any ideas for CEEweb support and activities in this field?**

Promotion of wilderness concept among NGO community. Promotion of good examples for wilderness management in Natura 2000.

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