

PROJECT INFORMATION

State as at September 2011

Sustainable management of forests in Natura 2000 areas in the region of Smolyan, Bulgaria



Landscape in the Rhodope Mountains near Smolyan.
Photo: Green Balkans

Background

With its accession to the EU in 2007, Bulgaria is required to transpose European legislation into national law. This also refers to the establishment of the Natura 2000 network.

Large parts of the national protection areas, including the Natura 2000 sites, are wooded areas, thus falling under the responsibility of the national forestry authorities, who manage the forests on the basis of ten-year forest management plans. This makes the forest sector one of the key actors in the management of Natura 2000 areas in Bulgaria. However, many of the current forest management plans undermine the aims of the Natura 2000 concept, because their implementation causes damage to rare and threatened habitats. For this reason, immediate measures must be taken in order to protect the Natura 2000 sites located also in the Smolyan region.

On the other hand, forestry is an important source of income in this region, entailing the risk that any measures to enhance the protection of Natura 2000 forest areas will be met with rejection. Therefore, there is an urgent need to reconcile ecological and economic interests.

Project

The aim of this project is to facilitate both protection and sustainable use of forests within Natura 2000 areas in Bulgaria. To this effect, model approaches of forest management consistent with Natura 2000 requirements will be developed in Smolyan. Knowledge in the field of "sustainable forest management in Natura 2000 areas" will be created at local level, and a citizens' group will be established for the management of one selected Natura 2000 site. This way is how the project will help build local capacities for the management of Natura 2000 areas and start a dialogue between relevant decision makers to initiate a joint management of a selected Natura 2000 site. The final outcome will be a validated model describing how the aims of Natura 2000 and those of forest management plans can be consolidated. Furthermore, it is expected that the forestry sector will actively participate in this process and that modified forest management plans will be in place at the end of the project. Hence, the target groups in this project are all decision-makers involved in the management of Natura 2000 sites and in the preparation of forest management plans.

- Target region: Smolyan, Bulgaria
- Duration: 09/2011 – 02/2013
- Implementing organisations: EuroNatur, www.euronatur.org, Green Balkans, www.greenbalkans.org
- Beneficiary: Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water Smolyan, Regional Forestry Directorate Smolyan, State Forest Unit administrations, municipal administrations, local conservation organisations, forest owners, local companies
- Project identification: 380 01 266