



for a living planet



EUROPE'S LIVING HEART

Preserving Bosnia and Herzegovina's natural heritage using EU-tools



Technical Progress Report

Reporting Period: 1 January – 30 June 2008

Submitted to WWF Norway
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Project Title: Europe's Living Heart – Preserving BiH Natural Heritage using EU-tools

Project Number: BA0001.03

Subject: Biodiversity Conservation

Region: Neretva river basin and the whole Bosnia and Herzegovina

Countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina

Duration: 6 months (1 January– 30 June 2008) – Phase 1

Performer: WWF MedPO / WWF Norway

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Reporting Period: 1 January – 30 June 2008

Abbreviations:

| | |
|------|--------------------------------------|
| BD | Birds Directive |
| BiH | Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| CBD | Convention on Biodiversity |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| FBiH | Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility |
| HD | Habitat Directive |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| RS | Republika Srpska |
| SAC | Special Area for Conservation |
| SPA | Special Protection Area |
| WB | World Bank |

1. Executive Summary

With support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, WWF's Mediterranean Programme and WWF Norway launched the project "Living Heart of Europe" in January 2008. The long term goal is to implement EU Habitats Directive in full capacity in BiH. This project was instrumental in progressing towards the identification of biodiversity hotspots according to Natura 2000 standards of the Habitats Directive (HD) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It greatly fostered the dialogue among key stakeholders and strengthened public participation.

WWF mainstreamed the project activities into the governmental agenda of Bosnia and Herzegovina, substantially contributing to the implementation of the adopted BiH strategy to align to EU Habitat Directive.

Specific project goals:

- Support BiH's adaptation to EU-standards in nature protection (Habitats Directive), providing an example for other EU candidate countries
- Preserve biodiversity values in line with international commitments

The main tools to achieve the project objectives were the following:

- Implementation of basic pillars of the Habitat Directive in the country;
- Capacity building of local NGOs and other stakeholders to support the active participation of the civil society in the above mentioned process.

Within the framework of this project, the "EU Biodiversity Standards Scientific Coordination Group (HD WG)" was established. The main goal of this HD WG was to prepare a report aimed at identifying existing information relevant for the identification and selection of the main biodiversity values and areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina according to the EU Biodiversity Protection Standards (i.e. the Nature Directives). This activity builds on the outputs of previous Working Group created in the framework by the WWF's Mediterranean Programme "Living Neretva" in 2007, which produced a report for the Neretva catchment area in BiH¹.

The HD WG was composed of three members, supervised by representatives of relevant ministries responsible for environment at entity and state level. The HD WG activity has been coached and supported by WWF's experts Branko Vucijak and Alberto Arroyo.

The working group produced a report that compiles all existing information relevant to site identification and designation process for Natura 2000 network in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is a key reference for any institution or person interested in the issue in BiH. It includes information on institutions, experts, publications, digital information, legislation, stakeholders, projects and financing mechanisms, with links and contact details to allow access to additional information.

It also provides relevant information related to the EU biodiversity protection standards, like biogeographic regions, a first analysis of the presence of habitats and species of Community

¹ For more information see

http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/where_we_work/europe/what_we_do/balkans/index.cfm?uProjectID=BA0001

Interest in BiH, as well as the challenges and opportunities identified during the collection process which are useful for the definition of next steps.

Specifically, during the reporting period the following activities were implemented:

- Contracting of the local coordinator and selection and recruitment of the international leader for the working group on Habitat Directive;
- Selection and recruitment of the international leader for the preparation of the seminar on EU Biodiversity protection standards implementation in South Eastern Europe;
- Selection and recruitment of the local experts to create the working group on Habitat Directive;
- Preparation and implementation of Habitat Directive working group meeting in Sarajevo on April 16-18, with representatives of entity ministries responsible for environment (FBiH and RS entities are responsible for environment management.);
- Continuous work of the working group under the supervision of the international leader and resulting in delivery the draft report in May and the final report at end of June 2008;
- Continuous work of the international experts to deliver the South East Europe regional report on EU biodiversity standards, resulting in delivery of the draft reports in May and Final Reports at end of June 2008;
- Seminar on EU Biodiversity protection standards implementation in South Eastern Europe, delivered in Sarajevo April 16-18, for representatives of BiH administration responsible for environment management and representatives of the scientific community;
- Living Neretva website www.panda.org/zivjetineretvu maintenance and updating with info on Europe's Living Heart project;
- Bilateral meetings and contacts with international organizations, BiH public administrations relevant to environment management at different levels.

The following results are noteworthy:

- Representatives of relevant Ministries were very supportive of the project and confirmed that it was a very valuable opportunity to take off the alignment to EU standards;
- During the reporting period, and thanks to WWF's initiative, the Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism (acting as focal point for biodiversity on behalf of the whole country and in cooperation with the Ministry of Physical Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology of Republic of Srpska) made a number of commitments towards the protection of natural resources in the country. The list of commitments is long but it is important to remark that thanks to the work of Living Heart project WWF achieved to get the commitment of implementing major steps in using HD standards for improving the existing protected area system using Natura 2000 framework.
- Strategic partnership with WWF is more and more perceived as an opportunity for the BiH government in terms of EU standards alignment and his reputation as a reliable and valuable conservation organization has increased. Strengthening of this partnership has contributed to BiH decision to participate in the "Big Win for Dinaric Arc" event at CBD COP-9 in Bonn, during which six countries of the region (Slovenia, Croatia, BiH, Serbia, Albania and Montenegro) made major commitments on working towards establishing a representative system of protected areas at the level of five Environmental Ministers and one Secretary of State.

2. Project Successes

- The interest of the BiH government on Habitat Directive and Water Framework Directive has been greatly increased. The administrations have shown a strong motivation but also the appreciation for WWF support in undertaking this path, which without WWF back up, would be very challenging. As a proof of such motivation and appreciation BiH environmental government has signed a list of national priorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in delivering on the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas in the Dinaric Arc during the CBD COP meeting in Berlin in May 2008. This was the result of several WWF projects implemented in BiH including the Europe's Living Heart project (the list can be found in Annex 1).
- A report compiling all existing information relevant for sites identification and designation process for Natura 2000 sites in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been produced under the direct supervision of relevant Ministries. Nowadays it is the reference document for Natura 2000 designation process in BiH.
- The combination of resources available, skilled staff based locally and well rooted in the political arena, and WWF experience all over Europe has proved invaluable and well performing. WWF has been able to transfer the experience gained in EU countries through local staff to the BiH government.

3. Progress on Activities and related financial issues

Overall

During the reporting period the work-plan was regularly implemented. The working group completed and delivered their reports in due time, even though the project period was extremely short. The report was reviewed, commented and shaped by local BiH administration representatives. It was made widely accessible through the Living Neretva web site.

Local language link: <http://www.panda.org/bs/vijesti/index.cfm>

English version link :

http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/where_we_work/europe/where/bosnia_herzegovina/neretva/resources/index.cfm

Many bilateral meetings were held with the objective of harmonizing the Europe's Living Heart project activities and results with ongoing projects/initiatives/policies already existing in the region and supported by the institutions met, and avoid any potential duplications. They were also meant to increase the interest of the BiH government on Nature Directives (Habitat Directive and Birds Directive). The exercise has been expectedly successful and well received by all the organizations met.

The project was closed with an unspent amount of 8.573 € This saving was due to: cheaper conditions than predicted for the organization of working group meetings, drop out of one

expert of the working group, and lower costs than predicted of communications activities (mainly covered by Living Neretva project)

Objective 1: Strategic support for government institutions to adapt to HD-standards

Activity 1.1 Working group: EU Biodiversity Standards Scientific Coordination

- A group consisting of an international WWF expert and three local experts was established in March 2008 and trained in April 2008. The first meeting of the Working Group was organized back-to-back with the seminar on EU Biodiversity protection standards implementation in South Eastern Europe, held in Sarajevo April 16-18. The task of the working group was the identification and assessment of baseline for HD-adaptation in BiH, namely: i) identification and systematization of the habitats and species of the annexes of the HD which exist in BiH, ii) analysis of additional research needs, iii) identification of unique BiH species and habitats to be taken into consideration, iv) identification of relevant institutions and stakeholders at a national level that should be engaged in the Habitat Directive implementation (similar work as previous working group did for Neretva basin within Living Neretva project in 2007, but this time scaled-up to national level). The report was drafted and delivered for internal WWF comments in late May 2008. It was then reviewed in detail and commented by local BiH public administration representatives, namely by representatives of Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism and Republika Srpska Ministry of Physical Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology. Based on the comments and suggestions received, the working group revised and amended their work and delivered final report on end of June 2008.

Activity 1.2 Capacity building for the adaptation to EU biodiversity standards

- A workshop was organized in Sarajevo in 16-18 April and attended by 35 participants. The workshop provided the participants with information on: i) EU nature protection standards, ii) experiences of HD adaptation in other Balkan and EU countries (such as Romania, Bulgaria, Malta, Austria, Germany), iii) funding possibilities for Natura 2000 network implementation and management. Furthermore the priorities for future Natura 2000 implementation were identified and the way forward discussed. WWF ran the workshop with international experts but consulting the relevant BiH administrations responsible for environment to tailor it to their demands and needs. The full report of the workshop can be found in Annex 2.

Objective 2. Awareness raising, civil society, public participation

Activity 2.1 Report “Natura 2000 in South Eastern Europe“

- International consultants were hired in March 2008 to prepare the report on preserving biodiversity in South East Europe using EU standards. The report was meant to describe the current state of the art in Bosnia and Herzegovina re HD implementation as well as in Montenegro and Serbia. The data collection was done through interviews with administrations’ representatives that took part to the seminar on EU Biodiversity protection standards in South Eastern Europe, (Sarajevo, 16-18 April), and later contacts to fill gaps and gather information. The report was drafted and delivered for internal comments in late May 2008, and then reviewed and commented by local BiH public administration representatives,

specifically by representatives of Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism and Republika Srpska Ministry of Physical Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology. Based on the comments and suggestions received the international experts delivered the final report on end of June 2008.

Activity 2.2 Maintain and update website with info on project, in English and in the national language(s)

- Living Neretva website www.panda.org/zivjetineretvu was updated with information on Living Heart's project. The website is online to share information on nature and sustainable development with the broadest possible public audience. The web page <http://www.panda.org/bs/vijesti/index.cfm> contains all relevant documents, reports and presentations produced by Europe's Living Heart project, enabling full transparency of its activities.

4. Problems and Constraints

No major problems or constraints affected the project progress. Nevertheless it must be remarked that the extremely short period (six months) posed a real challenge to set up the project team and the group of consultants, implement the project activities and ensure proper consultation processes with the relevant authorities.

5. Unexpected effects

As mentioned previously, strategic partnership with WWF is more and more perceived as an opportunity for the BiH government in terms of EU standards alignment and his reputation as a reliable and valuable conservation organization has increased. Strengthening of this partnership has contributed to BiH decision to participate in the "Big Win for Dinaric Arc" event at CBD COP-9 in Bonn, during which six countries of the region (Slovenia, Croatia, BiH, Serbia, Albania and Montenegro) made major commitments on working towards establishing a representative system of protected areas at the level of five Environmental Ministers and one Secretary of State.

6. Learning and Sharing

It is important to underline that the stakeholders, in particular the civil society, in Neretva river basin have been recently focusing their interest and actions on the construction of new dams and operations of the existing ones (being pro or con according to the interest group). Governments of the two entities in fact have announced plans to construct new (quite numerous small and few big, still discussed) hydropower plants in the basin, as well as plans

to establish nature protected areas in the basin. Planned dam construction locations sometimes overlap with the same places intended to be protected under national protection schemes. The new water infrastructures are highly opposed by environmental NGOs and the civil society in general, while the energy sector is lobbying for their construction. This is creating a very conflicting environment where the application of EU biodiversity standards could ensure the achievement of sustainable solutions.

7. Adaptive Management

There were no deviations to the proposed project activities and adaptive management responses were not needed.

8. Communications activities and achievements

The communications work has focused its efforts on feeding the existing website www.panda.org/zivjetineretvu developed in the previous project phase of Living Neretva. The web site was used to provide visibility to Europe's Living Heart project. Through discussions with the team the objectives of the web site have been set as follows:

- to inform people in BiH about the Europe's Living Heart project in local language (it also included a summary in English to target people outside BiH);
- to provide accessibility to all the Europe's Living Heart documents, reports and presentations, enabling so transparency of the project;
- to provide self-explanatory photos describing biodiversity values;
- to introduce WWF brand in BiH.

The web site is hosted by WWF International web site www.panda.org under the Mediterranean programme section at www.panda.org/zivjetineretvu. Panda.org receives everyday 15.000 visitors and it is one of the most respected and visited environmental web sites worldwide. This will allow increasing importantly the profile of Neretva as an outstanding nature hotspot as well as position WWF in BiH conservation and policy arena.

For more information refer to the communications chapter of Living Neretva project report.

9. Communications/ adaptive management, lessons

No specific difficulty or limitation encountered related to communications or adaptive management to be reported for the reporting period.

10. Future Issues/ Challenges

The future challenge will be to fill the gaps identified to fully use N2000 as a tool for nature protection and maintaining the engagement of the BiH administrations.

11. Overall Assessment of progress

In general the project made the expected progress against the action plan. Activities were launched on time and completed according to the proposed schedule. The funds requested for different activities proved to be adequate. The members of the working group had enough professional skills and group work ability, and were committed to produce appropriate results, supervised by public administration representatives and engaged international experts.