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## **EUROPE'S LIVING HEART phase II**

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



### **Technical Progress Report**

**Reporting Period: 1 July 2008 – 31 December 2008**

**Submitted to WWF Norway  
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**Project Title:** **Europe's Living Heart Phase II - *Preserving Bosnia and Herzegovina's natural heritage using EU-tools***

**Project Number:** **BA0003.01**

**Subject:** **Biodiversity Conservation, Natura 2000**

**Region:** **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Countries:** **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Duration:** **12 months (1 July 2008– 30 June 2009) – Phase 2**

**Performer:** **WWF MedPO / WWF Norway**

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**Reporting Period:** **1 July – 31 December 2008**

**Abbreviations:**

BD	Birds Directive
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
GEF	Global Environment Facility
HD	Habitat Directive
N2K	Natura 2000
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RS	Republika Srpska
WB	World Bank

# 1. Executive Summary

The project is in its second phase (1 July 08 – 30 June 09) and this report covers the first 6 months of the project, namely 1 July 08 to 31 December 08.

This reporting period was primarily used to clarify with BiH environmental administration the most urgent needs to set the project implementation environment. It is worth to be mentioned that the start of the project has been warmly welcomed by the administrations, since the process of N2000 network identification is currently seen as a priority. This has been very encouraging for WWF team and facilitated delivery.

One of the most remarkable conclusions of these months of work has been the selection of a subgroup of species and habitat from the Habitat Directive (HD) and Birds Directive (BD) annexes to focus the project activities. It would be in fact impossible to cover all the species and habitats listed in the annexes (lack of time and resources).

The mapping exercise of this subgroup is on going under the guidance of a partner, Daphne, who gained experience in the N2000 set up process in Slovakia. The pilot sites for validating on the filed the maps under production has been also agreed and the sites under selection in consultation with the authorities.

The identification of legal and administrative gaps and needs, including preliminary assessment of compliance of BiH environmental legal environment with EU legislation, has been started and is ongoing.

A training is in the preparation phase (consultant is contracted), and is planned to be held in the next reporting period. It will target government institutions and will be focused on fundraising strategy to cover the scientific information gaps.

## 2. Project Successes

1. Full agreement reached with BiH administrations on project priorities, activities and processes to deliver results;
2. Selection of international and local experts.
3. Mapping of N2000 sites on going;
4. Legal analysis of BiH laws and gaps with HD and BD Directives on going.

### 3. Progress on Activities

#### **Overall**

This reporting period was primarily used to clarify with BiH environmental administration the most urgent needs to set the project implementation environment. It was concluded that the level of available data on species and habitats from Habitat Directive (HD) and Birds Directive (BD) annexes is very low, and even these data are often unreliable, thus very comprehensive data collection is needed to propose the Natura 2000 network on scientific basis. Comparing the process with another country of similar area and population, Slovakia, more than 350 people were engaged for mapping the network along 5 years in order to validate the data on the field. As a consequence it was concluded that the current project can address only a certain number (50-60) of habitats and species from BD and HD annexes would be selected and related data collected by desktop studies and validated in selected pilot areas. The gaps will be covered during the next project phases.

At the same the identification of legal and administrative gaps and needs, including preliminary assessment of compliance of BiH environmental legal environment with EU legislation, has been started and is ongoing.

Finally, a training targeting government institutions and focused on fundraising efforts needed to cover scientific information gaps is in the preparation phase (consultant is contracted), and is planned to be held in the next reporting period.

## Objective A: Implementing EU biodiversity protection standards requirements

Under this activity the following sub activities were planned (as from proposal):

- Start the site designation process in BiH: the Working group on EU Biodiversity Standards Scientific Coordination will produce the first report identifying the habitats and species protected by EU-legislation that are present in BiH and whose viability needs to be ensured, identify additional research needs to inter alia identify unique BiH species and habitats to be added to EU's list of habitats and species of "community value".
- Identify pilot sites within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. For these sites, the process of implementation of the EU biodiversity protection standards will be carried out in a deeper and comprehensive way, to serve as pilots for nationwide implementation of EU standards. Following actions will be implemented:
  - o Identification of the sites
  - o Identification of relevant stakeholders within the sites and meetings with local authorities
  - o Collection of relevant information (administrative, legal, threats to biodiversity) needed for drafting pilot action plans to ensure biodiversity

### *Assessment of potential Natura 2000 sites*

The following are the progresses achieved:

- A report identifying the habitats and species protected by EU-legislation and listed in Annexes of Habitat Directive (HD) and Birds Directive (BD) which are present in BiH has been produced. A total of 64 habitats and 169 species listed in HD annexes and existing in the three biogeographical regions of BiH (namely Continental, Alpine and Mediterranean) have been identified, as well as 169 birds listed in BD annexes. In the next reporting period the project will produce the first GIS layers of geo-position information on a selection of 50-60 of these habitats and species, based on desktop studies and experts' knowledge. It was also agreed that these GIS information will be validated on the field at selected pilot areas. An analysis of species and habitats unique to BiH but missing from the Directive annexes and of "community value" have been initiated for proposing their listing in the EU Directive annexes. An effort is being made to focus on species and habitats shared in the Balkan area, to make the request of their enlisting in the HD more reasonable to the EC.
- A workshop for experts, supervised by BiH environmental administration of BiH, is scheduled for January 28 - this will be the opportunity to discuss the selection of pilot sites within both the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska (objective is to later on validate on the filed the data collected on species and habitats). These sites aim to serve as pilots for nationwide implementation of EU biodiversity protection standards. At present several areas are candidates to be selected as pilot sites, i.e. Livanjsko polje (Ramsar site), Sutjeska park, Hutovo Blato wetland (Ramsar site), Blidinje area. Identification of relevant stakeholders within the sites and meetings with local authorities are also envisaged during the next reporting period, as well as

filling in standard data forms for designated sites in accordance with EU-standards.

### *Capacity Building*

Under this activity the following sub activities were planned (as from proposal):

- Identify legal and administrative gaps and needs and consult with responsible authorities on the best ways to address needed changes in the next phases of the project.
- Provision of strategic support (capacity building) to relevant government institutions, including fundraising efforts to cover scientific information gaps or other identified needs.
- Exchange visit for administration representatives to selected protected areas in EEA countries, in order to learn from best practises for replication in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The following are the progresses achieved:

- The assessment of compliance of BiH environmental legal environment with EU legislation is ongoing. At this aim an international consultant has been contracted and is leading the identification of legal and administrative gaps and needs, supported by a local lawyer. This team has been also tasked to consult responsible authorities on the best approaches to close such gaps. The same team is preparing a training for relevant government institutions on fundraising efforts to cover scientific information gaps or other identified needs.
- An exchange visit for administration representatives is currently prepared by WWF ATW office from Barcelona, and supposed to be implemented during the next reporting period.

### **Objective B: Raising Awareness**

#### *Raising Awareness activities*

Under this activity the following sub activities were planned (as from proposal):

- Educate school children (and indirectly their parents) in the Neretva pilot region about the importance and role of BiH's natural heritage in securing long-term prosperity and cultural identity in a sustainable society, through a small grant project engaging local NGOs as facilitators.
- Carry out summer camps for school children in potential Natura 2000-sites to introduce pupils (and indirectly their parents) to the Natura 2000-concept and what sustainable use means, through a small grant engaging local NGOs as facilitators.

Contacts with local potential candidate NGOs for small grants (summer camps) and N2000 awareness raising activities were established by WWF ATW office. The implementation of the activities is foreseen in spring time when the weather will be appropriate.

## *Dissemination of information*

Under this activity the following sub activities were planned (as from proposal):

- Developing networks and ensuring meeting points for regional diffusion of relevant experiences with adaptation to EU nature protection standards.
- Communicate project results beyond South East Europe, including the preparation of printed material and presentation of results to the European Commission by inter alia launching the status report developed during Phase I nationally, regionally and in Brussels;

An international consultant has been contracted to prepare two project leaflets: one on the specific achievements of BiH in implementing EU biodiversity protection standards and WWF support to it, another to cover both the regional (Balkan or SEE) aspect of the implementation of EU biodiversity protection standards and BiH benchmarks. Furthermore a technical paper is under preparation to present “Europe’s Living Heart” project activities and results achieved so far, to be published in an appropriate (scientific) magazine to communicate project results beyond South East Europe.

A regional conference on nature protected areas, organized by Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism and held in Bihac (BiH) during November 2008 was used as an excellent opportunity for regional diffusion of relevant experiences of Europe’s Living Heart project with adaptation to EU nature protection standards, where WWF was represented by its Program Office director, Europe’s living Heart project assistant and contracted international consultant, delivering a paper which will be published in the conference proceedings.

## 4. Problems and Constraints

None.

## 5. Unexpected effects

None

## 6. Learning and Sharing

Applicable to final reporting.



## 7. Adaptive Management

None.

## 10. Future Issues/ Challenges

The validation of data in pilot sites will be a key action and although its implementation is of no concern to WWF, the results will be the indicator of how good the desktop data collected is and how reliable for the continuation of the process.

## 11. Overall Assessment of progress

Overall the project is progressing in a very promising way and according to original plans.