

**Biodiversity Conservation & Economic Growth
(BCEG) Project**

**National Eco-tourism Meeting
Sofia, 11-12 February, 2003**

REPORT

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BCEG Project

Bulgaria Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project

is a collaborative initiative between the

United States Agency for International Development
and the
Government of the Republic of Bulgaria

implemented by
Associates in Rural Development, Inc.

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Acronyms

ARD	Associates in Rural Development, Inc.
BCEG	Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project
GEF	Global Environment Facility (note the acronym “GEF” is also used generically in Bulgaria for the USAID/GEF Biodiversity project)
IQC	Indefinite Quantities Contract
MOEW	Ministry of Environment and Waters
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NETS	National Eco-Tourism Strategy
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NNPS	National Nature Protection Service (of MOEW)
PMU	Project Management Unit
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Preface

The Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth (BCEG) Project is funded by the United States Agency for International Development, (USAID), as part of its strategic support to the Republic of Bulgaria. The Project is sponsored by USAID in conjunction with the Government of Bulgaria – the Ministry of Environment and Waters (MOEW). The Project is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two governments, and its implementation covers the period: **May 2000 – June 2003**.

This Project is a logical evolution of earlier USAID assistance to biodiversity conservation in the country. It follows some 10 years of assessment, technical assistance and financing of Bulgaria's biodiversity conservation strategic development, new protected area legislation, and new national park institutions. The Project is designed to capitalize on the achievements of the Bulgaria Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Biodiversity Project (implemented during the period June 1995-April 2000), and builds on lessons learned.

The BCEG Project addresses six specific contract themes known as tasks or “contract result packages”. The BCEG Project includes the finalization and implementation of two national park management plans, the development of a new management plan for Rila Monastery Nature Park. It assists in the development of financial mechanisms and strategies to ensure the solvency of national parks. The Project pilots economic growth activities with select target groups around two Bulgarian national parks. And it continues to build on the principles of strong public information and awareness as stepping stones for informed public engagement and promotion of biodiversity conservation and protected area management activities.

This Project is issued as a Task Order (Contract Number LAG-I-00-99-00013-00) under the USAID Global Biodiversity and Forestry Indefinite Quantities Contract (IQC); and is implemented on behalf of USAID by Associates in Rural Development, (ARD) Inc., of Burlington, Vermont, USA.

The Project is implemented through a Project Management Unit (PMU) based in Sofia, and includes a Team Leader, three Bulgarian technical specialists, and support staff.

Project activities are coordinated through two mechanisms –

- (a) Project Coordination Group – serves as a steering committee for Project planning and monitors implementation. This consists of the National Nature Protection Service of the MOEW, and national park directors, the PMU and USAID.
- (b) Project Counterpart Team – PMU staff working with MOEW/NNPS counterparts

The Project is largely implemented through the Directorates for Rila and Central Balkan National Parks. Additional technical assistance is provided by Bulgarian and international consultants, and is based on specific terms of reference.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The National Eco-tourism Strategy (NETS) has evolved out of three important sets of activities:

- Community ecotourism models developed with the support of the country's protected areas, particularly, national parks and select nature parks.
- An international Eco-tourism Conference – Mountains, Protected Areas and Eco-tourism in October of 2002, and the contributions of national and international specialists in the field of ecotourism.
- The efforts of a NETS drafting team of subject-matter technical specialists assembled from the Ministries of Agriculture and Forests, Environment and Waters, Economy; national and nature park experts, conservation and eco-tourism NGOs, Eco-tourism Associations, and eco-tourism business representatives.

The National Eco-tourism Meeting was organized to specifically focus on a working draft of the National Eco-tourism Strategy and to share with the Bulgarian ecotourism community and donors, the opportunities and further challenges of adopting Europe's first national eco-tourism strategy.

1.2 Objectives

The Meeting focused on the following objectives:

- ◆ Official launching of the Draft National Eco-tourism Strategy to national stakeholders.
- ◆ Deliberation of the process proposed for finalizing the Strategy.
- ◆ Review of the mechanisms for the collaboration of Governmental agencies.
- ◆ Identification of financial sources for the implementation of ecotourism policy and practice.
- ◆ Presentation and “marketing” of 12 eco-tourism initiative project award winners soliciting support for project implementation.

1.3 Participation (*Appendix 2*)

Number of registered participants - 179:

Affiliation	Numbers
◆ Representatives of seven ministries and one agency	26 participants
◆ Representative of Parliamentary Commission in Environment and Waters	1 participant
◆ Protected Areas Management	19 participants
◆ National branch and product tourism organizations	16 participants
◆ National and regional associations of the municipalities	9 participants
◆ Non-governmental organizations	26 participants
◆ Regional and local tourism associations and tourism councils	21 participants
◆ National and international donors and their programs	23 participants
◆ Commercial banks	2 participants
◆ Private entrepreneurs	18 participants
◆ Educational and academic institutions	12 participants
◆ Regional governors and local government mayors	6 participants

The Meeting was funded by the United States Agency for International Development through the Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project.

2.0 Agenda of the Meeting

2.1 Opening

The meeting was opened by Dolores Arsenova, Minister of Environment and Waters of the Republic of Bulgaria, and Debra McFarland, Mission Director of the United States Agency for International Development in Bulgaria (*Appendix 3* and *Appendix 4*).

Both opening speakers emphasized the importance and the attention paid by both governments to this priority sector.

2.2 Key Note Addresses

Introductory statements were made by:

- Mrs. Fatme Iliaz, Deputy Minister of Environment and Waters – on the role of Protocol for Cooperation in ecotourism between the three Ministries and opportunities for expansion of the Protocol;
- Mr. Dimiter Hajnikolov, Deputy Minister of Economy – on the place of National Eco-tourism Strategy in the overall National Strategy for Tourism Development in Bulgaria.
- Mrs. Meglena Plugchieva, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forests – on opportunities for applying eco-tourism as a tool for biodiversity conservation and protected areas (nature parks) within World Bank Project for Forestry Sector in Bulgaria;

2.3 Agenda in Plenary, Day 1 (*Appendix 1*)

Devoted to presentation and discussion of the Draft National Eco-tourism Strategy for Bulgaria. The following were presented and discussed:

- Overall framework of the Strategy;
- Strategic objectives and measures for their achievement;
- Mechanisms for Strategy implementation and geographical priorities; and
- Actions for Strategy finalization and elaboration of an Action Plan.

2.4 Agenda in Plenary, Day 2

The second day of the Meeting started with a session on the opportunities for donors coordination in funding eco-tourism projects. The rest of the day was devoted to presentation and defense of the twelve innovative eco-tourism projects awarded at the First National Forum *Eco-tourism, Mountains and Protected Areas. Partners for Prosperity*, held in October 2002. (*Appendix 5*)

3.0 National Meeting Results

3.1 Participants agreed unanimously on three important Recommendations:

1. The importance of developing a national strategy for eco-tourism, and the need to finalize it as the basis for *elaboration of a five-year National Ecotourism Action Plan*.
2. Enrich the document and develop stronger ownership and familiarity with its purpose through a process of *review at regional level*.
3. Institutionalize a National Eco-tourism Working group within the National Tourism Council.

3.2 Follow-up and Participant Contributions

This meeting was designed as *a working session to initiate a process of professional and political engagement* for finalizing this strategic document.

This meeting was used to accumulate impressions and comments on the Strategy. More substantial contributions are invited as written proposals by the middle of March, 2003. These will be reviewed and added to the strategy as appropriate.

By the end of April, the drafting team assisted by the BCEG Project as secretariat, will refine the draft NETS.

All participants received a letter immediately after the Meeting reiterating the drafting team's commitment to this timetable. The team will review and incorporate additional public commentary to the NETS in the next draft.

3.3 A Step Towards Donor Coordination

The National Meeting resulted in an important step towards future coordination of donors' efforts in funding national eco-tourism development.

Representatives of the following institutions provided important presentations of their roles in ecotourism development, and the mechanisms that they use to support it:

- Delegation of the European Commission in Bulgaria – an overview of SAPARD, ISPA, and PHARE funds.
 - Coordination and Management of Programs and Projects Directorate at the Ministry of Economy;
 - Directorate of Rural Regions and Investments in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests
 - Directorate of Program and Financial Coordination of International Investment Projects at the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
- United Nations Development Program
- National Trust Eco-Fund
- National Enterprise Fund for Environmental Activities Management

Representatives of the World Bank in Bulgaria and Swiss Agency for Development took part in the meeting, but were unable to make presentations regarding their programs in support of eco-tourism.

Donor representatives took this opportunity to update their respective donor profiles in the draft NETS.

Two of the institutions – the Enterprise Fund for Environment Activities Management, and the Development of Rural areas and Investments Directorate at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, invited all organizations with innovative eco-tourism projects to submit them for consideration.

A representative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (SAPARD) invited all original 69 eco-tourism innovation project contestants to submit their concepts for consideration by SAPARD fund managers in the MOAF. It was from these 69 contestants that the 12 eco-tourism public-private sector innovation projects were selected in October of 2002, during Bulgaria's first Ecotourism Conference.

As an immediate follow-up to the Meeting, donors and the representatives of foreign missions and international organization, received a letter with information regarding the outcome of the Meeting and next steps in development of the NETS.

3.4 Recommendations for the National Eco-tourism Strategy

Several general recommendations were targeted specifically at the philosophy and overall framework of the document.

- The need for significant improvement in public awareness of nature conservation as one of the conditions for economic prosperity should be outlined specifically in the Strategy. Eco-tourism is primarily a business, as is any other type of tourism. It is based on creating and selling products. At the same time eco-tourism aims at contributing to a new public vision and attitudes and practices towards nature and cultural conservation.
- Develop a more targeted Bulgarian definition for eco-tourism. The definition should address important aspects of cultural tourism as well. The overlap between these two specialized types of tourism should be clearly identified. The competitive advantage of Bulgaria as an ecotourism country is not simply in its preserved biodiversity but in its combination of natural resources conservation with existing local, cultural, historical and rural lifestyle characteristics.
- Outline more clearly the relation and interaction of ecotourism with other types of Bulgarian tourism terminology, e.g. cultural, rural, adventure, alternative, etc. Strengthen the relationship between ecotourism as a form of sustainable tourism. Our national lexicon for terms associated with alternatives to mass tourism are often confusing and divisive. The NETS must stress terminology within ecotourism that can embrace specialty tourism, niche markets, and be linked to an essential set of "products" being offered. The Strategy is expected to outline opportunities for interaction and complementary tourism products to further their establishment in the market. More specific examples of the elements of ecotourism that support the principles of sustainable tourism are to be identified.

- Strengthen the role of this Strategy by comparing it with other national strategies and policies. These efforts should include a review of strategic documents for several national policies and sectors including: culture, agriculture, transport, regional development, education, and local government, in order to relate present strategy objectives with current policies.
- Specify more clearly the roles and responsibilities of national, regional and local levels in implementation and management of the NETS. The management of this particular sector requires more involvement on the part of the state than of mass tourism, especially in its early phase - both politically and financially. At the same time, eco-tourism is the type of tourism that must be realized on regional and local levels in order to succeed. The role of local authorities and regional management bodies seems to be different in comparison with their role in managing conventional forms of tourism. Eco-tourism appears to be more demanding of local communities and local government than mass tourism. Local governments and citizens are almost “required” to take a more active role in defining and developing their local tourism, cultural, and environmental objectives if eco-tourism is to be successful. In developing strategic objectives, the NETS must illustrate at which levels these objectives will be operated and managed.

Recommendations Related to Strategic Objectives and Measures for Their Achievement

- **Biodiversity Conservation- many institutional homes for eco-tourism** – Biodiversity conservation is not the single domain of any one institution or the sole responsibility of protected areas. The Strategy focuses too much on the mandate of protected areas and their affiliate ministries as being the key actors in national nature conservation. While this is true for protected areas, the Strategy should more completely identify the roles and responsibilities of other institutions in implementing biodiversity conservation laws and practices. Both biodiversity conservation and environmental management are essential components of business development and local government’s activities. Only by combining the efforts of these environmental conservation actors can we best achieve the aims of ecotourism and nature conservation. Consequently, more efforts should be focused on adding these shared roles and responsibilities to the set of strategic objectives in the Strategy.
- **Quality Standards and Certification** – Both these regulatory mechanisms are important if Bulgaria is to make ecotourism a cornerstone of its national tourism development policy. Standards are obviously different for mass tourism, than for all aspects of ecotourism. The “star ranking” system is not appropriate, and an alternative must be provided to guide ecotourism development in the nation. Special attention needs to be paid to issues related to quality standards and criteria for assessment of the quality of ecotourism services. Standards should be linked to standards being set for other aspects of national tourism development – such as environmental management standards. The Strategy should have a strategic objective that includes this important aspect of the national ecotourism development agenda.
- **Financial mechanisms** – The NETS is weak in identifying what aspects of government and private sector financing need to be developed in support of ecotourism. Financial

mechanisms – including subsidies, incentives, loan guarantees/credit authorities, etc. need to be addressed more clearly in the Strategy. The NETS should better identify the constraints and opportunities for public and private sector financial engagement in this sector.

- **Small and Medium Enterprise** – Given the scale of much of the private sector in ecotourism, there is a need to more clearly identify the opportunities and constraints facing SME development in this sector – particularly as regards national policy. SME policy development in favor of ecotourism should form one of the strategic objectives of the NETS. Ecotourism SME policy development should be closely linked with other SME policy development in the country. It should also be linked with other SME activities and outreach efforts (e.g. business centers and business incubators).
- **Local Government** - The Strategy needs to address more specifically the roles of local authorities in eco-tourism development. The NETS strategic objectives should include an additional objective: “to identify the mechanisms for integration of eco-tourism in regional and local strategies and plans for development”.
- **Branding** – Developing the national ecotourism image, its marketing, and its promotion, are all essential aspects of implementing this national strategy. These aspects of the national ecotourism brand should be strengthened in the NETS. Their development and promotion should be stressed as a matter of priority in the Strategy’s implementation.
- **Eco-Regions** - The Eco-regions (concentrations of ecotourism opportunity and priority areas of national biodiversity conservation) need to be enriched with the information about culture- historical heritage of the Bulgarian people and landscape. Eco-regions should eventually include more detailed descriptions of territories, because these regional definitions form an important geographic focus for business organization and development, branding, marketing, etc. The NETS should also describe more clearly the role of existing regional and local tourism associations and the practices of donors’ initiatives/projects.

Recommendations Related to Strategy Finalization and Development of an Action Plan.

- **National Ecotourism Working Group** – A specific “working group”, focusing on ecotourism policy and action planning, should be incorporated into the National Tourism Council. It should address three important aspects of ecotourism development in the country – (1) ecotourism policy and strategy integration within the National Tourism Development Strategy and Policy; (2) supervise completion of the Strategy and 5 Year Action Plan for priority investments and activities; (3) provide advice and guidance through the Ministry of Economy to other technical ministries, on matters related to ecotourism strategy implementation. The composition of the NEW Group should **not** be based on proportional representation, but should be based on merit, interest, stakeholder representation, and motivation. Concrete discussions and negotiations should be started immediately to ensure fair representation of stakeholder interests, an operating budget, and a scope of work.

- The National Eco-tourism Working Group should become the mechanism for the implementation of the Protocol agreement between the three ministries. The Protocol should be open to expansion if other Ministries indicate that they are interested in formalizing their participation in the process.
- Regional and local tour operators should be involved in the process of regional public discussions, especially in the relevant regions where their businesses operate;

3.5 Support and Recommendations to the Twelve Innovative Eco-Tourism Projects

The presentation of the twelve innovative projects evoked the interest and active participation of many attending the meeting. The following suggestions and recommendations are offered by the Meeting to the 12 projects:

- **More clear definition and description of expected business and social results.** These should be measurable in terms of how people/businesses will benefit. Examples include more jobs, income, visitor numbers increased, etc. How will you monitor if you are reaching these results?
- **Clear and full description of expected impacts on natural environment** (both positive and negative); - how will the project contribute to improving the environmental situation of the region, what measures are to be taken to mitigate eventual negative impact on environment, how this impact will be monitored and managed?
- **Better project justification** – What need does the Project fill? How was this determined? Is there strong public demand and support? What local institutional support makes your project feasible? What institutions are offering support and what are the specifics of that support? How do project activities match protected area Management Plans?
- **Sustainability** – What will continue on after this Project's funding is finished?
- **Counterpart funding** – Specify what funding will you contribute to the Project, for what exactly, and how was it calculated? Show specific levels of counterpart funding of the types of “in-kind” service you are providing.

After the meeting, all Project sponsoring organizations received a short directory of known Bulgarian-based funding institutions. The BCEG Project continues to assist project authors in their efforts to link funding prospects with projects. This clearing house function will become a key aspect of successful regional or national ecotourism projects implementation. At present, there is no clearing house (guidance or assistance) provided to ecotourism program and projects in search of funding and capacity building in the country.

3.6 Public Information

The working meeting was supported by a wave of wide public information on eco-tourism issues in Bulgaria. The meeting was covered by 34 publications in the national printed media, four publications in the electronic newspapers, over 1.40 hours of radio and TV broadcasts. (*Appendix 6*)

4.0 Next Steps

By the end of February written notes and proposals on the NETS from participants are expected. Each registered participant received a specific invitation inviting written contributions.

By the end of March, the report and full list of participants in the meeting will be published on the existing Internet web site for eco-tourism www.moew.government.bg/eco-tourismforum.

New executive summaries of awarded ecotourism innovation projects and the financial report on costs associated with the project development will be published on the site as well.

By the end of May, the final Draft of the Strategy will be developed, incorporating the recommendations of participants made during the meeting, and the contributions submitted in writing.

By the end of May, a formal proposal will be made for institutionalization of the National Eco-Tourism Working Group within National Tourism Council. The proposal will comprise a draft composition, terms of reference for its activity over the first year, and *modus operandi* for its Secretariat for this first year. The action plan for the finalization of the Strategy at the local and regional level will be prepared by the same deadline. The National Ecotourism Working Group proposal and the plan for the finalization of the Strategy at the local and regional level will be submitted to the National Tourism Council along with the final Draft Strategy in June.

The process of public review of the Strategy at local and regional level is meant to contribute to a final version of the Strategy and to a five-year National Action Plan. Both of these documents will be submitted for endorsement and adoption to the Council of Ministers, through the National Tourism Council. The target date for this process is between January – March 2004.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Agenda of the Meeting

National Eco Tourism Meeting

February 11 – 12, 2003
Sofia, Park Hotel Moskva

Using the contributions of Bulgarian and international specialists from the First National Ecotourism Conference – Mountains, Protected Areas and Ecotourism in October of 2002, the first draft Strategy of the National Eco Tourism Strategy has taken shape.

In order to alert the Bulgarian community and donors to the opportunities and further challenges of adopting Europe's first national eco-tourism strategy, the National Eco Tourism Meeting will focus on the following objectives:

Objectives:

1. Official launching of the Draft National Ecotourism Strategy (NETS) to national stakeholders.
2. Deliberate the process for finalizing the Strategy aimed at building political ownership, and initiating of a process of consolidating regional/local eco-tourism stakeholders, that leads to a 5-Year Action plan for eco-tourism activities and investments.
3. Identify and discuss the mechanisms for the collaboration of Governmental agencies that can be incorporated in an expanded Memorandum of Understanding between Government agencies.
4. Identify possible financial sources for the implementation of the Strategy.
5. Presentation and marketing of the 12 eco-tourism initiative project award winners soliciting support for project implementation from national and international funding sources.

Participants:

1. Ministries of Environment and Water, of Economy, Agriculture and Forests, Regional Development, Culture, Education, and Transport
2. Parliamentary Committee for Environment and Waters
3. National, regional and local tourism associations
4. National NGOs with an eco-tourism focus
5. Protected areas
6. Regional Associations of Municipalities
7. National and International Donors
8. Commercial Banks with a tourism investment portfolio
9. Ecotourism Innovation Award winners
10. Businesses with an eco-tourism interest
11. Education and Academic Institutions focused on eco-tourism
12. Mayors engaged in eco-tourism growth and development

Agenda11 February

- 10.00 – 10.30 Opening – Minister Dolores Arsenova, Ms. Debra McFarland
Objectives of the meeting
- 10.30 – 11.00 Presentation of the Framework of the Draft Strategy.
- 11.00 – 11.15 Presentation of the Protocol for Collaboration for Ecotourism between three Bulgarian Ministries – Ms. Iliaz – Deputy Minister in the MOEW
- 11.15 – 11.30 Presentation of the mechanisms for incorporating the Ecotourism Strategy in the overall Bulgarian National Tourism Strategy – Mr. Hadjinikolov, Deputy Minister in the MOE
- 11.30 – 11.45 The Ecotourism links in the Worldbank forestry Project – Ms. Plougchieva, Deputy Minister in Ministry of Agriculture and Forests
- 11.45 – 12.15 Presentation of the Strategic Objectives of the National Ecotourism Strategy. Questions and Answers
- Objectives for biodiversity and cultural heritage conservation
 - Objectives for development of ecotourism business
 - Objectives for national ecotourism policy development
 - Objectives for regional and local sustainable development
- 12.15 – 13.45 *Lunch*
- 13.45 – 14.30 Discussion – Strategic objectives and strategic measures
- 14.30 – 15.00 Presentation of the mechanisms for Strategy Implementation
- Institutionalizing the Strategy
 - Local authorities involvement
 - Financial mechanisms
 - Geographical priorities
- 15.00 – 15.45 Discussion on the mechanism for Strategy Implementation
- 15.45 – 16.15 *Coffee break*
- 16.15 – 16.45 Presentation. Finalizing the Strategy and Development of an Action Plan
- Formalizing the national ecotourism working group
 - Finalizing the Strategy through regional coalitions and public hearings
 - Finalizing the Strategy through thematic national working groups
 - Development of Five Years Action Plan
- 16.45 – 17.30 Discussion. The process of finalization of the Strategy.
- 17.30 Summary and closing of the day

12 February

- 9.00 – 9.15 Opening of the day.
- 9.15 – 10.30 Donor coordination and the identification of opportunities for financing the implementation of the Action Plan. Questions and Answers
- 10.30 – 11.00 *Coffee break*
- 11.00 – 11.30 Summary of the discussions on the Strategy
- 11.30 – 12.30 Presentations of the awarded projects – 15 minutes each
- Vrachanski Balkan Nature Park - “Eco-museum” in the Open
 - Ecotourism Development in the Roussenski Lom Nature Park
 - Protected Sites – the Hidden Pearls of Rhodope Mountains
 - From Ahtopol to Yabalkovo – Strandja

- 12.30 – 14.00 *Lunch*
- 14.00 – 16.00 Presentations of the awarded projects – 15 minutes each
- The Protected Zones - a Spring of Life, Providing Water for the Tourists and the Local Community - Etropole
 - In Peace with Nature – Improving the Opportunities for Contact with Nature -Samokov
 - Complex Development of Ecological and Cultural Tourism in the Russenski Lom Nature Park
 - Organization of Periwinkle Festival - Strandja
 - Center for Eco and Survival Training in Nature - Kalofer
 - Eco Trail to the Goritsa Waterfall and Sokolov Izgled – Sapareva Banya
 - Nature for All – Zlatni Piasatci
 - Ecotrails in Pirin
- 16.00 Closing session

Appendix 2

List of Participants

NATIONAL ECO TOURISM MEETING – SOFIA, 11-12 FEBRUARY 2003**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

No.	Name	Position, Organization	Contact Details
1.	Mr. Alexander BABINOV	Chief Secretary, Agency for SMEs (Sofia)	2 Triaditza Street, Sofia 1000 BULGARIA Tel.: +359 2 981 6600 Fax: +359 2 986 1988
2.	Mr. Amadeus KRASDEV	National Coordinator, Green Patrols National Movement	9 Dondoukov Blvd., Sofia 1000 BULGARIA Tel.: +359 2 980 3545 Fax: +359 2 980 4138
3.	Mr. Andrey GORANOV	Grants Officer, FLGR – Foundation for Local Government Reform	22-A San Stefano Street, Sofia 1504 BULGARIA Tel./Fax: +359 2 943 44 33 agoranov@flgr.bg
4.	Ms. Anelia DIMITROVA	Investments Officer, Bulgarian American Credit Bank (Sofia)	16 Krakra Street, Sofia 1504 BULGARIA Tel.: +359 2 965 8349 Fax: + 359 2 944 5010
5.	Mr. Angel NEMOV	Mayor, Municipality of Samokov	31, Macedonia Samokov BULGARIA Tel.: +359 722 22121 Fax: +359 722 22035
6.	Dipl.Eng. Angel TOPORCHEV	Deputy Mayor, Municipality of Velingrad	35 Khan Asparuh Blvd., Velingrad 4600 BULGARIA Tel.: +359 359 52020 +359 359 52019 +359 359 22268 Fax: +359 359 54341 +359 359 52020 velingrad@unacs.bg oa@velingrad.com
7.	Ms. Angelina Spasova NIKOLOVA	Presenter, Town of Etropole Tourism Council	1-a G. Dinitrov Street, Etropole, BULGARIA Tel.: +359 89 470663 Tel./Fax: +359 720 2035 angel-nik@abv.bg

No.	Name	Position, Organization	Contact Details
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15.	Mr. Atanas Nikolov SHUMANOV	Member, Rila Eco-Tourism Association	Village of Govedartzi, Sofyiska District, BULGARIA Tel.: +359 7125 2220

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Appendix 3

Statement

**by Ms. Arsenova, Minister of Environment and Waters,
at the Opening of the Meeting**

Statement

**by Ms. Arsenova, Minister of Environment and Waters
at the Opening of the National Eco-tourism Meeting
Sofia, 11-12 February, 2003**

Dear Mrs. McFarland,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor and pleasure for me, for a second time within a couple of months, to open a National Forum, devoted to eco-tourism development in Bulgaria. It has always been NATURAL for Bulgaria to be a country of eco-tourism for its unique conserved nature, extraordinary diversity of life-styles, culture and traditions, and rich historical heritage.

These prerequisites have always existed but it seems that now is the moment Bulgaria to declare itself as a country with high appreciation for these values, which add up in turn, to European values. In this relation, I take the opportunity here to mention with gratitude the support of the United States Agency for International Development.

Bulgarian government and the Ministry of Environment and Waters appreciate the importance of this sub-sector and for the last years have been consistently giving their support for its development. This will be continued for the future, too. This is due to the significance of eco-tourism in two aspects: First, eco-tourism is an effective way for nature conservation of a country, secondly, it is a tool for socio- economic development of small settlements around natural areas. Both aspects are among our government priorities.

The First National Eco-tourism Strategy for Bulgaria will be discussed at this meeting. Once again, we seem to be the first country in Europe that has developed such a strategy, as it has been the case with the National Strategy for Biological Diversity Conservation. We are positive that this document will turn to be an important tool in planning state investments in this sub-sector, and for targeting both external financial support and Bulgarian and international private investments.

Ecotourism is an activity to be performed at local and regional level, since it implies small-scale services at places of natural, cultural and traditional attractions. It is hardly possible to manage eco-tourism efforts just from central state institutions offices or big tourist companies headquarters. Its success depends largely on local authorities, local associations, and family businesses scattered all over the country. That is why, the document to be presented today, is expected to take up a process of *socialization* throughout the country, and be discussed and supplemented with the views and intentions of local authorities and entrepreneurs.

We expect that, following a process of broad public discussion and planning in the whole country, the Strategy will become a national consensus document. We also expect a five-year Plan to result, which will represent our government investment program in eco-tourism.

The Ministry of Environment and Waters together with the other ministries, NGOs and the private sector will continue to be one of the main partners in the process of finalization of the Strategy, development of an Action Plan, and their implementation. We are responsible for keeping the most important condition for eco-tourism development, i.e. conservation of nature, which makes us part of a national and international effort.

Wishing you a successful and efficient work at the National Meeting and looking forward to see you again at our next meetings!

Appendix 4

Statement

**by Ms. McFarland, USAID Mission Director,
at the Opening of the Meeting**

Statement

**by Ms. McFarland, USAID Mission Director
at the Opening of the National Eco-tourism Meeting
Sofia, 11-12 February, 2003**

Dear Minister Arssenova,
Deputy Ministers, donors, ladies and gentlemen

Since 1992, Bulgaria has established a number of “eco” firsts, particularly in relation to biodiversity conservation and the environment. These efforts are important achievements in Europe, and indeed, the world.

Bulgaria has now embarked on another “eco” first – Europe’s first National Ecotourism Strategy. USAID is proud and delighted to be a part of these precedents. Our experience in Bulgaria has been positive in this realm. We’ve seen the growth and institutionalization of a protected areas system, and the development of modern biodiversity conservation and protected areas management. In addition, we’ve seen positive results from US Government investments in park management plans that support economic growth in pilot areas around select national parks.

One of the most important of these has been the success of ecotourism. These models of ecotourism have demonstrated that **ecotourism is**:

- A business development tool – it puts money into people’s pockets and creates jobs;
- A community development tool – it can build civic cohesion, pride and solidarity;
- An educational tool – it emphasizes nature, its diversity and our relations to it;
- A park management tool – it’s a way to build support and share the benefits of conservation practices and sustainable use between protected areas and people;
- A cornerstone of the sustainable development agenda, because it links the environment with people’s traditions, their culture, their history, and their livelihoods, AND engenders a sense of respect;
- A competitive advantage for Bulgaria – both in the region, and in Europe. Ecotourism is a marketable national product and a pre-accession tool.

More than 35 local, regional and national associations of ecotourism related ventures now characterize Bulgaria. Some of these are business associations, some are local tourism councils, others are groups that have consolidated around information and visitor centers. Bulgaria is on the path to consolidating its natural, cultural and geographic advantages in a viable, competitive product. These efforts are scattered throughout the country, with more than 80% of these linked to Bulgaria’s rich natural resource base and with strong ties to local traditions, culture and practices.

USAID is pleased to see that our support has attracted Government interest and endorsement. We are happy to help galvanize the wide diversity of ecotourism interests in the country. We are particularly pleased to support the drafting of the National Eco-Tourism Strategy and note the important inter-ministerial cooperation that characterizes its development.

We are confident that the National Ecotourism Strategy has merits for Bulgaria. We are sure that the process proposed to complete it will build a strong constituency for its implementation. We look forward to the institutionalization of this process and to a 5-year action plan for ecotourism activities and investments as a result.

Thank you.

Appendix 5

Summaries
of Projects Submitted
Including Financial Report of Costs Spent on Project Awards

Project**“VRATCHANSKY BALKAN” NATURE PARK – AN OPEN-AIR ECO-MUSEUM**Implementing organization:**“Vratchansky Balkan” Nature Park Administration**Vratsa 3000, 1 Ivanka Boteva, POBox 241
tel. (+359) 92 658 49vratchanskybalkan@abv.bgwww.bg-parks.netProject duration:**18 months**Budget*Total:* **66 290 BGL***Contribution by the Organization and Its Partners:* **8 520 BGL***Funds Required to Complete the Project:* **57 770 BGL**Introduction:

The Directorate was established in 1996, as a division of the National Forestry Board to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests. It carries out activities, related to the study and the conservation of the biodiversity on the Vrachanski Balkan Nature Park territory, as well as development of infrastructure, and creation of opportunities for tourism development

Project Objectives:*1. Primary goal of the project.*

Development of eco-tourism in the territory of “Vratchansky Balkan” Nature Park (VBNP), through the elaboration of a radically new tourist product, combining attractive sites and their interpretation.

2. Objectives.

- Increase the number and the length of stay of tourists and the diversity of tourist services.
- Encouragement of small private businesses and creation of opportunities for income generation by local residents;
- Reviving old customs, traditions, crafts, growing of organic produce, etc.;
- Development of sustainable partnerships between private producers, local authorities, businesses, NGOs, etc.;
- Finding means and financing mechanisms for sustainable development of eco-tourism on the territory of the Park;
- Development of opportunities for labeling and certification of tourist products and sites;
- Development of rules and criteria (“Eco-museum - “Vratchansky Balkan” Nature Park” Charter) and a model for transformation of VBNP into an open-air eco-museum.

Project Justification:

VBNP is the second largest nature park in Bulgaria, having an unique landscape and biological diversity. The park offers very good opportunities for development of alternative forms of tourism, with a priority on eco-tourism. In the last four years, the administration of the park achieved significant results in this direction. In addition to the resources mentioned, a lot of tourist infrastructure – hotels, educational routes, eco-trails, visitor centers, dairy farms, sheep farms, etc. are located or being built on the park territory. The existence of these resources provides an opportunity for socio-economic development in the region.

The status of the VBNP assumes development of eco-tourism as a leading form for offering tourist services. This would encourage the development of a new tourist product through the systematic organization of available resources and active involvement of local residents.

We named the development of this product after the establishment of partnerships between the individual owners of sites suitable for tourism and their innovative presentation, an “Open-air Eco-museum”

Expected Results:

1. Achieving sustainable development of eco-tourism on the territory of VBNP through the development of a two radically new products, consistent with the Park status.
2. Revived at least three old traditions and customs, typical for the region, related to the day-to-day life and livelihood of the people;
3. Long-term partnerships, aiming at tourism development, between the Park administration and representatives of the local authorities, businesses, NGOs, etc.
4. Provided opportunities for income generation by local residents, as well as finding means and mechanisms for financing future investments;
5. Prepared joint documents, containing the principles for development of “Ecomuseum VBNP.”

Main Project Activities:

1. Inventory of the facilities and the attractions.
2. Marking of signposting of the eco-halls’ trails.
3. Improvement of the infrastructure near the sites.
4. Marketing and advertising of the trails – publication of a advertising set of materials, a video film, multimedia products, etc.

Project Budget

Required funds for:	(BGL)
1. Remunerations (salaries and honoraria)	15350.00
2. Travel (transport, per diems, lodging)	2488.00
3. Materials	480.00
4. Communications (telephone, email, internet, mailing exp.)	720.00
5. Administrative (office rental, office maintenance)	660.00
6. Specific (seminars, publications, equipment)	46592.00
Total required funds BGL:	66290.00

Financial Report - Cost accounting related to Project Design and Proposal Development

This organization was one of 12 innovative eco-tourism projects awarded 2000 BGL in October 2002, at the National Eco-tourism Forum. This money was used to develop their proposal, implementation schedule, and budget. The Project proposal summarized above was presented to more than 170 eco-tourism "stakeholders" in February 2003.

Project design costs include an accounting of the following categories

Type of expense	Expenses (BGL)
1. Transportation	659.10
2. Per diem and meals	488.00
3. Accommodation	69.55
4. Communications	105.43
5. Office materials	207.11
6. Consultant fees	463.00
Total in BGL	1992.19

Project
ECO-TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN
ROUSSENSKY LOM NATURE PARK PROTECTED AREA

Implementing organization:**Rousse Tourism Council Association**Rousse 7000, Svoboda Sq. 6, Fl. 4, Room 410
Tel: 082 / 235 960, Fax: 082 / 235 751Kamenova@rousse.spnet.netProject duration:**Ten months**Budget*Total:* **58,355 BGL***Contribution by the
Organization and Its Partners:* **12,607 BGL***Funds Required to Complete the
Project:* **45,748 BGL**Introduction:

The organization was established in 2001 as a non-for-profit organization with a General Assembly and a Managing Board. The main objectives of the Council are related to the establishment of tourism in the Municipality of Rousse, as well as implementation of educational activities and advertising of the local tourism product.

Project Objectives:

Development of higher quality eco-tourism in the settlements located within the Roussensky Lom Nature Park, by identifying and packing existing local sites, services and natural features.

Project Justification:

Within the Roussensky Lom NP there exist historic and nature landmarks, which enjoy great interest on the part of both national and foreign tourists. These are the Ivanovo Rock Churches and Medieval Cherven City architectural reserves; the Eagle's Rock cave, etc. The rich bio-diversity of the Park includes rare and endangered plants (over 800 species) and animals, with birds of particular importance. There are over 190 species of birds and the especially rare birds are of great attraction to many foreign ornithologists. The latter, as well as Bulgarian and foreign tourists, would be ready to stay at settlements within the Park, but local infrastructure, accommodation, recreation and entertainment facilities are still not sufficiently developed.

In 2002, the calling of large passenger vessels at the Rousse Port resumed. Their tour operators have requested interesting programs of local attractions, especially open-air picnicking. The existence of such opportunities is limited. One of the reasons is that individuals who were willing and capable to receive tourists do not have the experience and knowledge required to organize the overall activity of receiving such groups. A need arises to train local owners of rural guest houses in the necessary skills, so they are able to develop their own programs for organizing hospitality services and to publicize their products.

Expected results:

1. Increase of tourist flow (Bulgarian and foreign guests) not only in the area of Roussenski Lom River valley, but also in Rouse and the region as a whole, based on the forecast by tour operators. According to preliminary data over 2000 foreign tourists are expected to visit the sites at Bojichen, Obretenka and Nissovo during the summer season. In summer, sites at Koshov, Busen, Stulpishte and Lipnik, having a total of about 100 beds, will be able to accommodate over 3,000 local and foreign tourists. These include students on short-term vacations. The facilities in Koshov, Lipnik and Bojichen are suitable for year-round recreation, holiday festivities and training seminars.
2. Increase the employment in tourism, both in the settlements mentioned above and in the city of Rouse (hotel and restaurant managers, tourist guides).
3. Promotion of tourist sites: cultural and historical monuments, churches, monasteries, nature and archeological reserves (the Ivanovo Rock Churches and Medieval Cherven City architectural reserves; the Eagle's Rock cave, etc.).

Main Project Activities:

1. Organization of a 10-day seminar with five trainers for training 14 local homeowners – two representatives from each settlement, 5 lecturers. The training will cover the topics: Ecotourism and hospitality; Promotion and advertising of the Ecotourism product.
2. Repair works in one premise of the sites for developing thematic expositions, three flour-mill;
3. Building of two observation points in Bojichen plus a bakery, pottery wheel, and winemaking facility.
4. Marking of eco-trails
5. Production of advertising materials

Project Budget

Required funds for:	(BGL)
1. Remunerations (salaries and honoraria)	12213.00
2. Travel (transport, per diems, lodging)	1192.00
3. Materials	400.00
4. Communications (telephone, email, internet, mailing exp.)	500.00
5. Administrative (office rental, office maintenance)	1100.00
6. Specific (seminars, publications, equipment)	42950.00
Total required funds BGL:	58355.00

Financial Report - Cost accounting related to Project Design and Proposal Development

This organization was one of 12 innovative eco-tourism projects awarded 2000 BGL in October 2002, at the National Eco-tourism Forum. This money was used to develop their proposal, implementation schedule, and budget. The Project proposal summarized above was presented to more than 170 eco-tourism "stakeholders" in February 2003.

Project design costs include an accounting of the following categories

Type of expense	Expenses (BGL)
1. Transportation	330.00
2. Per diem and meals	60.29
3. Accommodation	240.00
4. Communications	138.92
5. Office materials	51.16
6. Consultant fees	1180.00
Total in BGL:	2000.37

Project
PROTECTED AREAS – THE HIDDEN PEARLS OF THE RHODOPE

Implementing Organization:**Rhodope Ecological Organization**

Tourist Information Center, Shiroka Lucka 4710, Smolyan District, Bulgaria

Tel: +359 3030 233

E-mail: eor@rhodope.org, antoniach@yahoo.com

Project Duration:**24 months**Budget:

Total: **164,990 BGL**

Contribution by the Organization or Its Partners: **34,717 BGL**

Funds Required to Complete the Project **130,273 BGL**

Introduction:

The organization was established in 1995 as a foundation. In 2002, it was re-registered as a non-for-profit organization. The main objectives of the organization are related to the research, conservation and restoration of the biodiversity of the Rhodopes, as well as the assistance to the sustainable development in the region.

Project Objectives:

1. Conservation of the unique bio-diversity of the Rhodopes, through development of sustainable eco-tourism programs.
2. Promotion of protected areas and natural phenomena, aiming at supporting businesses in the region and generating additional income for the members of the local community.
3. Increasing the ecological culture and degree of information of both the population of Rhodope and the general public, on the significance of Protected Areas and the need for their conservation.

Project Justification:

The Rhodopes are characterized by its unique biodiversity, as well as historical and cultural heritage. Simultaneously, the region suffers high levels of unemployment and poverty. At the present stage, the tourism development in the region is becoming of greater importance due to natural, cultural and historic features. The project is aimed at popularization of the Protected areas in the Rhodopes – sixteen protected localities and seven reserves, as well as towards the creation of conditions for the tourism development in the region. Envisaged are several stages for its realization, with a total duration of two years.

Expected Results:

A new tourist product – a circular itinerary (75 km hiking and over 260 km automobile route), introducing tourism in protected areas in Western Rhodopes providing impetus for development of local business and revenues for nature protection.

Specific Results:

- inventory of the bio-diversity of 17 protected areas;
- data base for accommodation and catering locations in 15 settlements;
- 30 persons trained form the State Forestry and Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Waters staff;
- 25 hotel managers trained;
- 18 young people and unemployed people trained;
- over 30 publications in the media and other editions;
- guidebook: full color, in Bulgarian and English, 2000 copies;
- multi-media CD-ROM: 500 pcs.;
- leaflet – 4,000 copies;
- Field Identifier of Blooming Plants in Western Rhodopes - 1000 pcs.;
- poster – 1,000 pcs.
- Internet site;
- improvement of tourist infrastructure: 17 information panels in the protected area, five recreation places, two view points, marking and signposting of 75 km of tourist trails providing access to the protected area;
- establishing new partnerships and improving communications between stakeholders in the region;
- increasing eco-culture of children and their knowledge of protected areas;
- increase in the number of tourists visiting the region.

Main Project Activities:

1. Inventory of bio-diversity of PA in relation to the project (floral and fungi diversity, diversity of birds and mammals; forest habitats).
2. Establishing a data base for tourist accommodation and catering locations along the itinerary; cultural and historical heritage; opportunities for sport activities.
3. Exploring the itinerary: road conditions, tourist trails and other tourist infrastructure.
4. Improving information and infrastructure services by producing and affixing at the appropriate places:
 - indicator arrows and panels in accordance with EU standards (brown background);
 - information and interpretative panels for each PA;
 - wooden pavilions and recreation places;

- view points from where birds and animals may be observed;
 - signposting of trails, providing access to PA.
5. Preparation and printing of information and advertising materials: guidebook, leaflet, poster, Field Identifier of Plants in Western Rhodopes, Internet site and multi-media CD-ROM.
 6. Organizing and carrying out of meeting and training seminars including:
 - meeting of principal stakeholders – mayors of municipalities, directors of State Forestries, Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Waters, Regional Forest Office, representatives of Ministry of Environment and Waters and National Forest Office, tourist associations, forest cooperatives, hotel managers, NGOs, etc.
 - training seminar on ‘Eco-tourism and PA’ for personnel of State Forestry, Regional Forest Office and Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Waters in the region;
 - training in rural tourism and training courses for mountain guides;
 - children’s drawing competition and open-air activities.
 7. Promotion of the itinerary through:
 - media campaign;
 - marketing of the itinerary: tour with tourist operators and participation in tourist exchanges and expositions.

Partners:

- National Roads Executive Agency;
- Local Tourist Council, Mogilitza;
- Center for Mountain Sport and Tourism, Momchilovtzy;
- Perelik Tourist Association, Smolyan;
- Silivryak Speleological Club, Trigrad.

Project Budget:

Required funds for:	(BGL)
1. Remunerations (salaries and honoraria)	36397.00
2. Travel (transport, per diems, lodging)	9986.00
3. Materials	1990.00
4. Communications (telephone, email, internet, mailing exp.)	5300.00
5. Administrative (office rental, office maintenance)	8200.00
6. Specific (seminars, publications, equipment)	103116.24
Total required funds BGL:	164990.00

Financial Report - Cost accounting related to Project Design and Proposal Development

This organization was one of 12 innovative eco-tourism projects awarded 2000 BGL in October 2002, at the National Eco-tourism Forum. This money was used to develop their proposal, implementation schedule, and budget. The Project proposal summarized above was presented to more than 170 eco-tourism "stakeholders" in February 2003.

Project design costs include an accounting of the following categories

Type of expense	Expenses (BGL)
1. Transportation	331.23
2. Per diem and meals	313.10
3. Accommodation	308.40
4. Communications	148.25
5. Office materials	153.82
6. Consultant fees	750.00
Total in BGL:	2004.80

Project
FROM AHTOPOL TO YABULKOVO

Implementing Organization:

**Bourgas Association of Ecological and Rural
Tourism**

Bourgas 8000, Ezeroto Park, College of
Tourism

Tel.: +359 56 843 036

Fax: +359 56 813 765

E-mail: baest@abv.bg

Project Duration:

12 months

Budget:

*Total Funds Required to
Complete the Project:*

27,414 BGL

Introduction:

The Bourgas Association for Ecological and Rural Tourism /BAERT/ was established as a non-for-profit organization in 1995. In 2001 it was re-registered, with the right to perform economic activities. The association members are legal entities, most of which are teaching in the Bourgas Tourism College. The BAERT objectives are related to the sustainable development of the southeast region through more efficient maintenance of the natural and cultural heritage.

Project Objectives:

Support of eco-tourism development in the vicinity of the settlements from the town of Ahtopol to the villages Gorno Yabulkovo and Dolno Yabulkovo, by designing and mapping and marking detailed ecotourism trails, involvement of the members of the local community in the processes of sustainable development of the area and turning eco-tourism into the primary source of their income.

Project Justification:

The project aims to address the problems of insufficient job opportunities for the residents of inland Stranja and of poor infrastructure in the region. The reasons for the success of the Project would be based on the rich natural resources of the Stranja Mountain and the good contacts of BAERT in the region. The current lack of information on tourism opportunities in Stranja suggests that a publication of an elaborated guidebook, containing detailed information on eco-tourism trails in the mountain, would be well received. The project is supported by the Bourgas College of Tourism, the Bourgas Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Waters, and other organizations and institutions. No special licenses would be required to run the project, but coordination with representatives of MoEW and the Ministry of Interior would be needed to extend activities in protected areas and border zones. Project sustainability is based on expectations for eco-tourism in Stranja to grow into a self-supporting sector, enjoying the backing of local associations, entrepreneurs and local authority.

Expected Results:

1. Improved presentation of the area,, publication of a guidebook in 2 000 copies and a advertising leaflet – 3 000 copies
2. Developed three detailed trail programs for the development of the ecotourism in the region of project operation – developed itineraries, based on the protected localities and territories in the region of the southern Black sea coast and Strandja, interpretation lectures developed.
3. New job opportunities for local community members are created through support activities and services.
4. Local government and local entrepreneurs improve the region's infrastructure: roads, recreation sites, etc.
5. The knowledge and skills of the local residents for performing tourist services and making them active participants in the decision making process are upgraded.
6. Better coordination of the entrepreneurs' actions, developing the tourism product in the region is secured.
7. Priorities and tasks for the improvement of the social and economic status of the local community through environment protection, are clarified.
8. Promotion of the area focuses attention on environmental issues of the region and demonstrates to the local community that protection of the nature is closely linked to their prosperity.

Main Project Activities:

1. Inventory of the eco-tourism resources in the region.
2. Development and marking of ecotourism trails, including hiking trails, horseback rides, biking and automobile trails, fishing trails and traditional rite routes.
3. Publication of a guidebook on the said trails (5000 copies).
4. Production of advertising and information materials.
5. Conduct of training seminars for local communities – one in each settlement throughout the Project range.
6. Organizing of two promotional tours to present the Project results.
7. Establishing local associations in communities currently lacking such bodies.
8. Preparation of proposals for designation of new protected areas.

Partners:

1. Regional Environment and Water Inspectorate- Bourgas
2. Strandja Nature Park Directorate
3. State Forestry Enterprises – Zvezdec, Kosti, Malko Turnovo, N. Panicharevo, Sredec, Tsarevo, State Game Breeding Station – Gramatikovo
4. The municipalities – Malko Turnovo, Primorsko, Srecec, Tsarevo.
5. Local associations – Brashlian, Gramatikovo, Brod Association, Nestinarka Association, Kosti Association, Sinemoretz 2002 association, Yasna poliana Association.

Project Budget

Required funds for:	(BGL)
1. Remunerations (salaries and honoraria)	12990.00
2. Travel (transport, per diems, lodging)	3321.00
3. Materials	250.00
4. Communications (telephone, email, internet, mailing exp.)	792.00
5. Administrative (office rental, office maintenance)	0.00
6. Specific (seminars, publications, equipment)	10061.00
Total required funds BGL:	27414.00

Financial Report - Cost accounting related to Project Design and Proposal Development

This organization was one of 12 innovative eco-tourism projects awarded 2000 BGL in October 2002, at the National Eco-tourism Forum. This money was used to develop their proposal, implementation schedule, and budget. The Project proposal summarized above was presented to more than 170 eco-tourism "stakeholders" in February 2003.

Project design costs include an accounting of the following categories:

Type of expense	Expenses (BGL)
1. Transportation	479.06
2. Per diem and meals	750.86
3. Accommodation	146.20
4. Communications	294.36
5. Office materials	199.58
6. Consultant fees	170.00
Total in BGL:	2040.06

Project**ECOTOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS – LIVE WATER SPRING
FOR TOURISTS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES**Implementing Organization:**Etropole Municipality Development
Association**

88 Roussky Blvd., Etropole 2170, Bulgaria

Tel: +359 720 72 03,

Mobile: +359 98 626535

E-mail: [Mariamar@abv.bg](mailto:Mariammar@abv.bg)Project Duration:**One year**Budget:

<i>Total:</i>	65,000 BGL
<i>Contribution by the Organization or Its Partners:</i>	10,000 BGL
<i>Funds Required to Complete the Project:</i>	55,000 BGL

Introduction:

The association is established as a non-for-profit organization in 2000. Its main objectives are related to the sustainable economic and social development of the Etropole municipality, the European integration and the development of the municipality as a tourism center. The association operates with the support and in cooperation with the local legislative and executive power and with the active commitment of the local community.

Project Objectives:

Creating conditions and opportunities for eco-tourism activities in the ‘Belycasha’ and ‘Bachishte’ protected areas of the Etropole. The Project will fill a serious gap in the offered products on the tourism market - a specialized complex of services for people with different levels of disability. The project can help to concentrate the efforts of various regions of the country in this regards and will offer a tourism product for people with disabilities at national level.

Project Justification:

The project has no analog in the country and on the Balkans (according to survey data). During project preparation, the opinion of different disabilities organizations, indicated that, people with disabilities would use the new tourist service if it is at a affordable price. Interest in the new routes was expressed also by retired peoples’ organizations.

The project is supported by the Regional Environment and Water Inspectorate – Sofia, which will assist in the development of herb nursery and the development of eco-trails. The project is also supported by the Etropole Municipality.

For the project will secure a special license or other documents, since a specialized tourism service will be offered.

Sustainability of the results will be achieved in the third year. We rely extremely to the established wide partnership, to the trails and the lodging facilities, which will be used for regular tourism, to European programs, which would assist supplement project activities. The tourist package is expected to generate funds for the sustainability of on the disabled activities focused.

Expected Results:

1. Creation of 30 new jobs for hotel operators, specialized guides, etc
2. Trained 20 specialists in offering specialized tourism services.
3. prepared 3 new interpretative products , based on the protected localities and the local community traditions.
4. Prepared is a brand new for the country complex tourism service for people with disabilities. Marked are 4 new trails.
5. A media package developed – for the presentation of the new product - printed a advertising material – 2 000 copies, organized a tour for the promotion of the trail, for journalists.
6. Development of partnerships between the local people, the local authority, the NGOs , private business, media in the field of the ecotourism and the environment protection.
7. Improvement of the social environment of the disabled people – opportunities for the specialized trail visit will be created, allowing them to restore their connection to the nature.
8. Increase the opportunities for income generation of the local community.
9. A nursery for herbs and plants.

Main Project Activities:

1. Development and publication of a leaflet for the new product.
2. Construction and repair activities along the trails
3. Construction of a nursery for herbs and plants as a support to the new products development.
4. Marking and securing of the trails in the protected areas
5. Construction of shelters and rest sites along the trails in the protected areas.
6. Development of a website for the trails and the opportunities for their use, by challenged people.
7. Training of specialized mountain guides.
8. Organization of promotional journalist tour for the promotion of the new product.

Partners:

1. Etropole Municipality
2. Etropole Tourism Association
3. Challenged people club – Etropole
4. Regional Environmental Inspectorate

Project Budget

Required funds for:	(BGL)
1. Remunerations (salaries and honoraria)	6660.00
2. Travel (transport, per diems, lodging)	1100.00
3. Materials	1740.00
4. Communications (telephone, email, internet, mailing exp.)	1340.00
5. Administrative (office rental, office maintenance)	4340.00
6. Specific (seminars, publications, equipment)	49820.00
Total required funds BGL:	65000.00

Financial Report - Cost accounting related to Project Design and Proposal Development

This organization was one of 12 innovative eco-tourism projects awarded 2000 BGL in October 2002, at the National Eco-tourism Forum. This money was used to develop their proposal, implementation schedule, and budget. The Project proposal summarized above was presented to more than 170 eco-tourism "stakeholders" in February 2003.

Project design costs include an accounting of the following categories

Type of expense	Expenses (BGL)
1. Transportation	156.56
2. Per diem and meals	
3. Accommodation	
4. Communications	117.27
5. Office materials	315.98
6. Consultant fees	1420.00
Total in BGL:	2009.81

Project
INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT OF
ECOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL TOURISM IN
ROUSSENSKY LOM NATURE PARK PROTECTED AREA

Implementing Organization:**Bulgarian National Committee for ICOMOS**

11 Slaveykov Square, Sofia 1000, Bulgaria

Tel. + 359 2 980 56 56

Tel. / fax + 359 2 980 60 50

Mobile: +359 88 779565

E-mail: Icomosbg@bgnet.bg, tkrestev@internet-bg.netProject Duration:**18 months**Budget:*Total:* **350,000 BGL***Contribution by the
Organization or Its Partners:* **50,000 BGL***Funds Required to Complete the
Project:* **300 000 BGL**Introduction:

The Bulgarian National Committee for ICOMOS which constitutes a branch of the world's largest non-government organization in the field of cultural heritage, was established in 1994. It has 84 individual and collective members, as well as two full-time employees. It cooperates with the authorities aiming at protection of cultural and natural heritage. The organization is the winner of PRIX JEP 2000 and the 2002 Grand Award of the EU Delegation to Bulgaria.

Project Objectives:

Achieving a synergic effect from the concurrent impact of eco- and cultural tourism; improving the area's quality as a unique cultural landscape. Establishing a model for integrated development of eco- and cultural tourism in Russenski Lom Nature Park.

Project Justification:

The demand for this Project is defined by the area's unique natural and cultural resources and the present inadequate state of their conservation and utilization. Cultural heritage is endangered, tourism is scarce and of low quality, coordination among different players is lacking and, what is particularly important, there is no strategy for their concerted action. These are the main reasons why investment initiatives remain unrealized more often than not, and the number of tourist visits is low. The feasibility studies at regional and municipal levels indicate the existence of a common will of all the participants to consolidate their efforts toward the Project's objectives. The support of major national institutions was secured (Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry), as well as of Rousse District State Administration, Ivanovo Municipality, Roussenski Lom Nature Park Administration, of tour operators, NGOs, etc.

No special conditions or licenses would be required for the Project start-up and operation. The Project would create a solid base for its own development, beyond the period of funding. It would include viable investment strategy, partnership mechanism, clear rules, etc. The developed model of joint action between the eco- and cultural tourism would be replicable.

Expected results:

1. Development of a pilot model and investment strategy for integrated eco- and cultural tourism development in the area;
2. Implementing measures for conservation of valuable natural and cultural resources;
3. Nomination of the area for European Cultural Itinerary and European Landscape status;
4. Promoting the image of the area on the national and international market by using modern means of promotion and advertising;
5. Increasing the incomes of the local community members, expansion of small- and medium-sized businesses, attracting young people to work in the tourism industry. Opening of new jobs;
6. Increase in the number of tourists visiting the area, in particular the influxes from the Danube River and from the Black Sea coastline.

Main Project Activities:

The activities under the Project were grouped in 8 program packages, which are supposed to produce 20 actual products.

The main activities will include, as follows:

- development of a specialized regulation plan for conservation and interpretation of the area and a digital data base of its resources;
- designing cultural itineraries as integrated tourist packages and linking them to the European cultural itineraries network;
- ensuring international support for the area's cultural heritage and its nomination for both world and European status;
- development of a pilot project for interpretation of natural resources through art;
- creation of multi-media promotional and advertising products;
- training: specialized training in the field of eco- and cultural tourism (40 trainees), training of local residents for tourist businesses (30 trainees), in the field of pedagogy of heritage – formation of an European class on heritage (30 students per year);
- creation of a model for management of alternative tourism – local council for eco- and cultural tourism, mechanism for partnership and support, etc.

Partners:

1. Roussensky Lom Nature Park Administration
2. Ivanovo Municipality, Rousse District
3. State Administration, Rousse
4. University of Architecture, Construction and Surveying, Sofia

5. European Institute for Cultural Trails (Luxembourg)
6. Rousse Tourism Council
7. Friends of Rusensky Lom Nature Park Club
8. Danubis Euro Region,
9. Tourist companies - Albena Tours, Danube Tours, Balkan Tours.

Project Budget

Required funds for:	(BGL)
1. Remunerations (salaries and honoraria)	121500.00
2. Travel (transport, per diems, lodging)	18000.00
3. Materials	17900.00
4. Communications (telephone, email, internet, mailing exp.)	17500.00
5. Administrative (office rental, office maintenance)	11600.00
6. Specific (seminars, publications, equipment)	163500.00
Total required funds BGL:	350000.00

Financial Report - Cost accounting related to Project Design and Proposal Development

This organization was one of 12 innovative eco-tourism projects awarded 2000 BGL in October 2002, at the National Eco-tourism Forum. This money was used to develop their proposal, implementation schedule, and budget. The Project proposal summarized above was presented to more than 170 eco-tourism "stakeholders" in February 2003.

Project design costs include an accounting of the following categories:

Type of expense	Expenses (BGL)
1. Transportation	44.00
2. Per diem and meals	48.00
3. Accommodation	38.00
4. Communications	270.00
5. Office materials	299.60
6. Consultant fees	1300.40
Total in BGL:	2000.00

Project
FESTIVAL OF PERIWINKLE (VINCA)

Implementing Organization: **Strandja Nature Park Administration**

1 Yanko Maslinkov Street,
Malko Turnovo 8162, Bulgaria
Tel: +359 5952 2229
Mobile: +359 48 828 943
E-mail: Strandja_park@abv.bg

Project Duration: **5 months**

Budget:

Total: **42,550 BGL**

*Contribution by the
Organization or Its Partners:* **7,270 BGL**

*Funds Required to Complete
the Project:* **33,660 BGL**

Introduction:

The management of the Strandja Nature Park was established in 1995. In 1998, it was transformed into a Directorate – a legal entity, under direct subordination of the National Forestry Board of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests. Strandja Nature Park has the settlements in its territory. The Main objective of the Directorate is the conservation of the unique nature of Strandja and the provision of sustainable social – economic development in the region.

Project Objectives:

Support sustainable development of the region of Nature Park Stranja through conservation of its bio-diversity. Its viability, and the local potential and conditions required for ecotourism development.

Project Justification:

Strandja Nature Park is the largest and one of the most exotic parks in Bulgaria. Due to its exceptional bio-diversity it could successfully compete with the best nature conservation areas in Europe. The lack of local industry has led local citizens to the only feasible choice - to undertake all necessary measures for tourism development as an alternative livelihood in the mountain. In addition very limited employment opportunities are available to those young people, who have chosen to remain in the area.

Development of tourism is the main priority of the Strategies for Development of the Municipalities of both Malko Turnovo and Tzerovo. These municipalities have planned and undertaken special measures for attracting investments for local infrastructure improvement. Tourism development is a priority also of the Southeastern Planning Region Development Plan for Bulgaria where a number of measures for improvement of infrastructure and communications of the Region have been envisaged.

Local residents are in need of an appropriate place where they could demonstrate and offer their local cultural practices of traditions as part of a tourism package for the region. That is why the Annual Periwinkle Festival event would serve as a forum, contributing strongly to creation of an gathering of people and practices in support of eco-tourism in the region; the forum to become a *living promotion* of the mountain, the mountain residents and the enormous local capability.; This promotional event could contribute to the prosperity and better future of the region.

The Strandja Nature Park Administration in partnership with the municipalities of M. Ternovo and Tzerovo, and Bourgas Regional Tourist Association, will organize a special event, entitled, "Periwinkle Festival" in Kosty village from 9 to 10 May, 2003. The Project target groups are the local communities and residents in the area of Stranjda Nature Park. This would be the first in an annual event.

Expected Results:

1. The Festival would constitute a friendly environment for exchange of information between people of diverse interests, both coming from the Park, as well as others and a place to generate and exchange ideas and experience.
2. Market of tourist services within Stranja Nature Park and local produce offered.
3. Forum presenting latest developments in conservation and preservation of natural, cultural and historic resources and their sustainable use.
4. Motivating local communities in the relevant settlements, to work jointly for sustainable development of the region.
5. Seven tourist itineraries would be created
6. Local residents trained as tourist guides;
7. Park area will be visited by 20 journalists and 30 tourist operators;
8. Total 15 publications, 30 radio broadcasts, 4 TV airings;
9. Printing of 500 posters and an information leaflet - 2000 copies;
10. Increasing the awareness of 100 local residents (participants in trainings and their families) through seminars and information regarding tourism event planning, hosting, advertisement and publicity skills.

Main Project Activities:

1. Organization of a special event - Festival of Periwinkle (symbol of Stranja Mountain). Organization committees will be set up in all settlements at the park area (22).
2. Media and marketing campaigns
3. Advertising materials will be printed
4. An event - eco-tourism exposition will be organized and developed during the festival.
5. Organization and training on the topics: The vegetation richness of the Strandja; Crediting and subsidy opportunities for the business; the good practices in Bulgaria for the alternative tourism development; The trainings are envisaged for 33 participants.
6. Survey and marketing of the interpretative trails on the Strandja NP territory.

Partners:

1. Malko Turnovo municipality
2. Tsarevo municipality
3. Bourgas Regional Tourism Association

Project Budget:

Required funds for:	(BGL)
1. Remunerations (salaries and honoraria)	10802.00
2. Travel (transport, per diems, lodging)	4070.00
3. Materials	1750.00
4. Communications (telephone, email, internet, mailing exp.)	700.00
5. Administrative (office rental, office maintenance)	2000.00
6. Specific (seminars, publications, equipment)	23228.00
Total required funds BGL:	42550.00

Financial Report - Cost accounting related to Project Design and Proposal Development

This organization was one of 12 innovative eco-tourism projects awarded 2000 BGL in October 2002, at the National Eco-tourism Forum. This money was used to develop their proposal, implementation schedule, and budget. The Project proposal summarized above was presented to more than 170 eco-tourism "stakeholders" in February 2003.

Project design costs include an accounting of the following categories:

Type of expense	Expenses (BGL)
1. Transportation	797.44
2. Per diem and meals	173.10
3. Accommodation	
4. Communications	
5. Office materials	838.90
6. Consultant fees	190.00
Total in BGL:	1999.44

Project**CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING AND SURVIVAL IN NATURE**Implementing Organization:**Central Balkan Eco-tourism Association – Kalofer**

2 Hristo Botev Street, Kalofer 4370, Bulgaria

Tel: +359 3133 24 05,

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Mobile: +359 48 762185

E-mail: mitko_tm@yahoo.comProject Duration:**10 months**Budget:*Total:* **72,050 BGL***Contribution by the
Organization or Its Partners:* **9,950 BGL***Funds Required to Complete
the Project:* **62 100 BGL**Introduction:

The Central Balkan Eco-tourism Association is a non-governmental organization engaged in activities for the public benefit. It was set up in June 2002. Founders are local businesses in the field of the tourism, representatives of the local authorities and the Central Balkan National Park. The main goals of the organization are coordination of interests and actions of, as well as activation of relevant bodies, organizations and companies in the area of ecotourism development in Kalofer and the region, and development of partnerships for conservation of nature in the Central Balkan National Park.

Project Objectives:

Enriching the eco-tourism product of the Association, base on the opportunities, offered by the Central Balkan National Park, through the development of a specialized camp for training of young people. Creation of environment for acquisition of skills, knowledge and ability to value nature and to learn about outdoor survival.

Project Justification:

Eco-tourism allows income generation by the local communities through the demonstration and interpretation of the nature and its beauties. Thanks to the support of Central Balkan NP, the association has succeeded in developing an eco-tourism product based on Park attractions.

We have elaborated the present project aiming at improving the Association's eco-tourism product and creating an environment for promotion of the natural values of the National Park among younger generations.

The Project would develop opportunities for setting an appropriate training environment for young people, educating them to respect natural values and the sustainable use of natural resources, as well as development of survival skills for extreme situations. The Training Center would contribute to expanding and enriching the Association's eco-products. New

customers and clients for the product are expected to be drawn from young people, who are potential long-term clients with a clear positive attitude towards the values of nature and high awareness of the need of their conservation.

Activities of the center would require also the development of services, related to supply of products and materials, which would provide an additional source of revenue for the local economy.

Expected Results:

1. Developed a specialized facility for practical outdoor training – bivouac for 22 people, with a special gear and infrastructure.
2. Trained 15 representatives of the local community from Kalofer region and the surrounding settlements for instructors in the Eco-training center.
3. Developed and published a set of training manuals for the Center's activities – 3 sets in 500 copies each.
4. Published an advertising material for the Eco-training Center – a leaflet in 2 000 copies
5. Developed is a procedure for the commissioning of the camp's running and operation
6. Enrichment of the Association's new ecotourism product.
7. Carried out an launch of the new product, through the conduction of a training of 20 young individuals.
8. Increase of the trust of the local people to the Central Balkan National Park as a source of opportunities for income generation.
9. Created new job opportunities for local people.

Main Project Activities:

1. Design and development of the infrastructure of a special bivouac in the region of Biala Reka, on the Central Balkan National Park territory. The bivouac will be developed with natural materials and will have the capacity for 22 people.
2. Establishment of a special hall for projections and lectures in the Kalofer Association's Information Center. In it will be conducted the theoretical classes.
3. Training of 15 people form the town for instructors – training of trainers. The training will be on three modules under the topics – Team work; CBNP biodiversity; behavior among nature and survival in extreme conditions.
4. Development of educational materials and curriculum for the children and the young people, which will acquire skills in the Center.
5. Design and printing of a advertising leaflet for the Eco-training Center and survival among nature, which will popularize the new association's product.
6. Organization of a pilot training within the project.
7. Development of a procedure for the assignment of bivouac's maintenance and running by the association.

Partners:

1. Central Balkan National Park Directorate
2. Kalofer Municipality
3. Karlovo municipality

Project Budget:

Required funds for:	(BGL)
1. Remunerations (salaries and honoraria)	18150.00
2. Travel (transport, per diems, lodging)	6675.00
3. Materials	775.00
4. Communications (telephone, email, internet, mailing exp.)	700.00
5. Administrative (office rental, office maintenance)	2500.00
6. Specific (seminars, publications, equipment)	43250.00
Total required funds BGL:	72050.00

Financial Report - Cost accounting related to Project Design and Proposal Development

This organization was one of 12 innovative eco-tourism projects awarded 2000 BGL in October 2002, at the National Eco-tourism Forum. This money was used to develop their proposal, implementation schedule, and budget. The Project proposal summarized above was presented to more than 170 eco-tourism "stakeholders" in February 2003.

Project design costs include an accounting of the following categories:

Type of expense	Expenses (BGL)
1. Transportation	223.76
2. Per diem and meals	577.35
3. Accommodation	70.00
4. Communications	
5. Office materials	46.00
6. Consultant fees	1060.00
Total in BGL:	1977.11

Project
ECO-TRAIL TO THE GORITZA AND SOKOLOV WATERFALLS

Implementing Organization:

Sapareva Banya Tourism Council

2, 3rd of March Street,
Separeva Banya 2650, Bulgaria
Tel: +359 707 21 40

E-mail: Sap_oba@abv.bg

Project Duration:

10 months

Budget:

Total: **56,400 BGL**

*Contribution by the
Organization or Its Partners:* **13,050 BGL**

*Funds Required to Complete the
Project:* **43,350 BGL**

Introduction:

The organization was established in 1999 as a non-for-profit organization. It unites 28 representatives of the local authority and the local businesses in the field of the tourism in Sapareva Bania Municipality. The main activities are the assistance in the development and the implementation of the policy in the field of tourism in the Sapareva Bania municipality, as well as coordination and realization of the local tourism product.

Project Objectives:

Enriching the tourist product of Separeva Banya Municipality, through the development of a eco-trail on municipal and Rila National Park territories.

Project Justification:

Sapareva Banya is one of the traditional gateways to Rila National Park. However, there remain many natural sites, which can be interpreted and shown to tourists, serving as a income generator for the local population.

The eco-trail will provide access by visitors to the valley of the Goritsa River – an extremely attractive area, with its cascade of waterfalls and pristine nature. The valley contains rich diversity of flora and fauna, but has traditionally been difficult to access. This project will provide guided access, interpretation, and we expect, turn Ovchartsı into a gateway community for Rila National Park.

The eco-trail track will provide the access to the attractive Goritsa river and will link the Ovchartsı village to the Panichishte resort, the Skakavitsa waterfall, the seven Rila lakes, the Rila Monastery and other parts of the Rila NP territory.

Expected Results:

1. Developed a new attraction in the region, based on the natural richness and the features of the Rila National Park.
2. Generating a constant flow of visitors and tourists to help improve the local economy.
3. New and reconstructed rural house that serve tourists experience an increase in revenue.
4. Possibilities for sale of local farm produce
5. Increase of employment and creation of new jobs.
6. Advertising material for the attraction – a leaflet in 2 000 copies.
7. Draft – Contract for the eco-trail operation.

Main Project Activities:

1. Development of a final design of the eco-trail
2. Development of the infrastructure along the trail
3. Marking of the trail
4. Design, production and installation of the informational infrastructure for the tourists
5. Design and publication of the advertising leaflet for the trail
6. Organization of event for the inauguration and promotion of the trail
7. Definition of a draft-contract for management and use of the trail between the Tourism Council and Rila National Park Directorate.

Partners:

1. Sapareva Bania Municipality
2. Rila National Park

Project Budget

Required funds for:	(BGL)
1. Remunerations (salaries and honoraria)	10750.00
2. Travel (transport, per diems, lodging)	7200.00
3. Materials	850.00
4. Communications (telephone, email, internet, mailing exp.)	1000.00
5. Administrative (office rental, office maintenance)	2000.00
6. Specific (seminars, publications, equipment)	34600.00
Total required funds BGL:	56400.00

Financial Report - Cost accounting related to Project Design and Proposal Development

This organization was one of 12 innovative eco-tourism projects awarded 2000 BGL in October 2002, at the National Eco-tourism Forum. This money was used to develop their proposal, implementation schedule, and budget. The Project proposal summarized above was presented to more than 170 eco-tourism "stakeholders" in February 2003.

Project design costs include an accounting of the following categories:

Type of expense	Expenses (BGL)
1. Transportation	
2. Per diem and meals	
3. Accommodation	
4. Communications	75.10
5. Office materials	489.70
6. Consultant fees	1450.00
Total in BGL	2014.80

**Project
NATURE FOR ALL**

Implementing Organization:

Zlatny Piasatzy (Golden Sands) Nature Park Administration in partnership with Center for Disabled Persons - Varna, Karin Home Foundation and Varna Tourism Chamber

10 R.Dimitriev Street, Varna 9000, Bulgaria
Tel. / fax +359 52 608 239,
Mobile +359 87 72 03 54

E-mail: zlatni@mail.vega.bg

Project Duration:

6 months

Budget

Total: **63,498 BGL**

*Contribution by Organization
or Its Partners:* **6,084 BGL**

*Funds Required to Complete
the Project:* **57,414 BGL**

Introduction:

The Zlatni Piasatzy Nature Park was established in 1996, as a division of the National Forestry Board of the Ministry of Environment and Water. The main objectives of the Directorate are aimed at the biodiversity conservation in the park territory, the conduct of scientific and conservation activities, and the development of educational and tourism programs.

Project Objectives:

The project aims to develop a new tourism product, adapted for persons with disabilities (persons with impaired sight, persons using wheelchairs, foreign tourists with disabilities) through building a providing access and interpretation of a natural environment.

Project Justification:

The need of Project implementation arises from: the lack of a generally accessible natural environment in North-East Bulgaria; the existing marginal attitude towards disabled persons; under utilized capacity of nature tourism resources; comparatively limited duration of the high tourist season; the need of increased knowledge of protected areas and their significance.

The following facts determine the Project feasibility:

1. A considerable number of persons with disabilities live in North-East Bulgaria.
2. Foreign tourists with disabilities visiting the same region.
3. The selected trail: the trail is located near the regional center – the City of Varna, and immediately next to Zlatny Piasastzy seaside resort, within the boundaries of the Nature

Park of the same name. Its natural parameters conform almost precisely to the requirements for information, interpretation and access. It extends over diverse vegetation areas and does not hinder the functional zoning and conservation priorities of the protected area. It uses already existing trails, roads and parking spaces.

4. The year 2003 was declared the European Year of Persons with Disabilities.
5. The Regulation of Areas Act is expected soon to be amended with a special regulation on universally accessible environment for the public, in public areas.
6. Project implementation presents a point of intersection of the policy, needs and interests of the Park Administration as an executing body of the state with persons with disabilities and their respective organizations, and with the tourist businesses.

Expected Results:

1. Development of new tourism trail, specialized for persons with disabilities.
2. Improved quality of life of persons with disabilities – universal access to natural environment would provide opportunities for fair and equal use of the benefits, deriving from closer contacts with nature. It would help to overcome the existing attitudes to people with disabilities (which places the accent on differences), and would contribute to their social integration.
3. Upgrading of infrastructure: corrective actions to slopes and pavement; setting information panels about the Protected Area (one piece) and biological diversity (7 pcs.); developing two recreation sites and one view point.
4. Enhanced knowledge on the Protected Area and its biological diversity.
5. Increased number of visits to the Protected Area.
6. Generation of revenue for the Park administration, persons with disabilities and organizers of tourism businesses.
7. Setting up a positive example and encouraging the process of building a universally accessible environment.

Main Project Activities:

1. Finalizing the layout of the trail location, its accessibility, physical parameters, description of natural environment and assessment of impacts on it, identifying the recreation capacity of the trail;
2. Sharing of experience and information on developing similar trails in protected areas;
3. Meetings with experts in design and auditing of universally accessible environments;
4. Infrastructure development design with respect to architectural elements (elevations, platforms, rails, panels, benches and tables, etc.), trail tracing activities (earthwork, escarping, repair works and laying of new road surface), setting of vertical signposts and horizontal marking (related to traffic organization and safety), preparation of an interpretation scheme (form and content of the information accompanying the trail, specification of the ways of its presentation);
5. Development of the lay-out and working plan of the infrastructure improvements.
6. Construction and assembly works: setting of 8 information panels, 11 wooden benches, 3 wooden tables, guiding railing (1050 m), bridge rails, 3 warning signs, 5 speed restriction bars, laying out a view point, two parking spaces, repair of asphalt road covering (100 sq.m.), laying new pressed gravel covering (750 sq.m.) lined with curb stones on both sides, 14 tactile beams, formation of 7 tactile pockets 1.80 x 1.80; correction of the road-bed: earthwork - excavation and embankment (65 meters).

7. Presentation and promotion of the trail: design and printing of a brochure in three languages, 2 paid publications, advertising in Internet, official opening of the site.
8. Organization of a event for the trail opening
9. Follow-up monitoring and control.

Partners:

1. Center for people with disabilities – Varna
2. Karin Dom Foundation
3. Varna Tourism Chamber

Project Budget

Required funds for:	(BGL)
1. Remunerations (salaries and honoraria)	9569.00
2. Travel (transport, per diems, lodging)	1246.00
3. Materials	271.00
4. Communications (telephone, email, internet, mailing exp.)	243.00
5. Administrative (office rental, office maintenance)	0.00
6. Specific (seminars, publications, equipment)	52168.00
Total required funds BGL:	63498.00

Financial Report - Cost accounting related to Project Design and Proposal Development

This organization was one of 12 innovative eco-tourism projects awarded 2000 BGL in October 2002, at the National Eco-tourism Forum. This money was used to develop their proposal, implementation schedule, and budget. The Project proposal summarized above was presented to more than 170 eco-tourism "stakeholders" in February 2003.

Project design costs include an accounting of the following categories:

Type of expense	Expenses (BGL)
1. Transportation	277.77
2. Per diem and meals	466.60
3. Accommodation	120.60
4. Communications	70.00
5. Office materials	111.03
6. Consultant fees	954.00
Total in BGL	2000.00

Project
IN PEACE WITH NATURE –
IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENJOYING IT

Implementing Organization:**Rila Eco-tourism Association**

29 Rilska Malina Street, Samokov 2000, Bulgaria
Tel: +359 722 29840,
Mobile: +359 88 573133

E-mail: ecotourism_rila@yahoo.co.uk

Project Duration:**One year**Budget

<i>Total:</i>	78,020 BGL
<i>Contributions by the Organization or Its Partners:</i>	13,680 BGL
<i>Funds Required to Complete the Project:</i>	64,340 BGL

Introduction:

Rila Eco-tourism Association was established in June 2002 as a non-for-profit organization with the right to conduct economic activities. The association is a result of common tourism development interests in the region of Samokov municipality, of local businesses representatives, the local authorities and Rila National Park. Main objectives of the association are: development of sustainable ecotourism; the protection, maintenance and renewal of natural resources, creation of opportunities for the local population to be employed in activities related to eco-tourism development.

Project Objectives:

Our project aims at enriching the joint eco-tourist product of the Association and Rila NP by developing a specialized bicycle routes and around RNP.

Project Justification:

The Ecotourism creates new alternative livelihoods for the members of the local communities. The Ecotourism Association, which unites representatives of various interested parties, develops ecotourism products, based on the natural richness of the park, and the cultural-historical heritage of the Samokov region. At the present stage the ecotourism product we offer needs diversification and variation. A marketing survey of the local market, carried with the support of the USAID shows that, a great potential for development of the ecotourism exists, but also showed that the tourists seek new experiences and access to more natural attractions.

In the past two-three years, the valleys of the Iskar and Beli Iskar rivers became a preferred destination for the biking tourists. During weekdays one can observe minimum of 20 – 30 biking tourists, and during the weekends and at a favorable weather, they number 100 – 150. As they approach the protected territory, they move chaotically, which

is undesirable and it is a precondition for damage of the park resources, and pollution of the environment. Accidents also happen due to the non-organized movement.

The project will create a specialized route for mountain cyclists in the Rila National Park – eco-bicycle treks. Trips will increase the responsibility of tourists, since it envisages programs and the development of an infrastructure with park information and the rules about the correct behavior on the track. The project also creates opportunities for the promotion by marketing the organization of a special event – a National mountain biking competition.

Expected Results:

1. A new attraction is developed – a specialized biking track of total 148.925 km of which 63.250 km are within the territory of the Park
2. The high season for visitors in the region of Samokov extended through the whole year
3. Prepared and printed 2000 advertising leaflets in Bulgarian and English
4. Produced 3000 advertising T-shirts and 2000 souvenirs for the special event and the track
5. Developed Internet site for the trail and the event
6. Developed interpretative infrastructure along the trail
7. Reduced risk of accidents with tourists
8. Increased conservation awareness of the local population, as well as of the tourists
9. Increased skills of 20 association members in working with the media and attraction of sponsors.

The operation and maintenance of the eco-bicycle treks would provide jobs for 18 representatives of the local community. Their number would grow to 30 persons for the period of the race. During that period we expect a tourist flow of 600 to 800 guests and participants. They will be accommodated at local hotels and guest houses. In addition to the event, we expect some 1500 – 2000 visits per month. Such estimations are based on observations and partial surveys made last summer.

Main Project Activities:

1. Survey and design of new attraction in the Park, a specialized mountain cycling trail network.
2. Marking and securing of the track of 148.925 km in aggregate, grouped in 26 trails, the shortest of which is 1.650 km and with an altitude difference of 35 m, and the longest hich are designed for advanced riders, reaching up to 22.000 km with an altitude difference from 600 m to 1300 m; 63.250 km, 42,5% of the itineraries are situated within the Park's boundaries, and the remaining part is in the surrounding zone, which allows to avoid overcrowding and excess of tourists in the Park's territory in compliance with the Rila NP Management Plan)
3. Design and development of the information infrastructure along the treks
4. Printing of advertising materials – leaflet in Bulgarian and in English about the cycling track, a poster and an brochure for the special event, promoting the eco-track.

5. Organization of the special event - *National mountain biking competition*, which to become traditional event.
6. Production and displacement of advertising billboards on a key locations and in the settlements
7. Training of 20 association members in working with media and attraction of sponsors
8. Production of souvenirs and advertising materials.

Main partners

1. Rila NP
2. Samokov Municipality.

Project Budget

Required funds for:	(BGL)
1. Remunerations (salaries and honoraria)	18480.00
2. Travel (transport, per diems, lodging)	4220.00
3. Materials	1320.00
4. Communications (telephone, email, internet, mailing exp.)	1200.00
5. Administrative (office rental, office maintenance)	2400.00
6. Specific (seminars, publications, equipment)	50400.00
Total required funds BGL:	78020.00

Financial Report - Cost accounting related to Project Design and Proposal Development

This organization was one of 12 innovative eco-tourism projects awarded 2000 BGL in October 2002, at the National Eco-tourism Forum. This money was used to develop their proposal, implementation schedule, and budget. The Project proposal summarized above was presented to more than 170 eco-tourism "stakeholders" in February 2003.

Project design costs include an accounting of the following categories

Type of expense	Expenses (BGL)
1. Transportation	90,00
2. Per diem and meals	420,00
3. Accommodation	70,00
4. Communications	150,00
5. Office materials	100,00
6. Consultant fees	1170,00
Total in BGL	2000,00

Project**ECO-TRAILS IN PIRIN**Implementing Organization:**Pirin Eco-tourism Forum**

Varosha 1834/35 (POB 454), Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

Tel: +359 73 36795, +359 73 81458

Fax: +359 73 35458

E-mail: ptf@pirin-tourism.bgProject Duration:**18 months**Budget:*Total Funds Required:* **95,790 BGL***Contributions by the
Organization or Its Partners:* **9,207 BGL***Funds Required to Complete the
Project:* **86,583 BGL**Introduction:

The Pirin Tourism Forum (PTF) is a registered tourism organization in the southwestern part of Bulgaria. It was established in 1997, as an association of 11 municipalities and Pirin National Park. The PTF's mission is to assist sustainable tourism development in the Pirin region, in harmony with the natural and cultural- historical heritage of the region and on behalf of the local communities. In 2000 the organization commenced a program for rural tourism development. Up-to-now two major steps have been taken – (1) inventory of the natural, cultural-historic and geographical resources; (2) human potential preparedness for the rural tourism development. PTF is a member of the PREPARE International Network -/PRE-accession Partnership for the Rural Areas in Europe/.

Project Objectives:*Main Objective:*

Conservation and promotion of natural resources of Pirin National Park through eco-tourism development.

Specific Objectives:

- Creation of an essential economic alternative and source of additional income for the residents of eight settlements in areas adjacent to Pirin National Park;
- Formation of a positive and pro-active attitude among the Pirin National Park visitors-to-be by means of heritage interpretation.

Project Justification:

Pirin National Park is part of the world natural and cultural heritage and is included in the UNESCO List. Unfortunately, the local population seems neither to fully realize the value of this unique treasure of nature, nor to accept it as their heritage which they have to preserve for the future generations. The way out of this situation is not an easy one, and the problem

cannot be solved in the short term, for it requires to a great extent a change in people's mentality. However, finding sustainable economic decisions for the welfare of the local communities would represent a real and practical mechanism for solving the problems and constitute our main task. One of the possible sustainable economic solutions would be eco-tourism.

Any eco-tourism project would be of no practical value with respect of the overall objectives if it does not include mechanisms for marketing of the products that will be developed under it. The Eco-trails in Pirin Project is targeting at selling packages of eco-tourist products exclusively on the Bulgarian market. Such a choice was based on the results of the market surveys by the Ministry of Economy and the Bio-diversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project (backed by USAID) conducted in 2001 – 2002.

Expected Results:

- Signposting of eight separate theme eco-trails situated near and linked to Pirin NP;
- Development of eight different options for two-day weekend trips, based on the eco-trails marked.
- Development of interpretative lectures for the eight itineraries
- Training of 13 interpreter guides for the trails
- Organized promotion of the new products for 16 national media journalists and tourism companies and their families
- Developed and printed 8 leaflets – 2 000 copies each for the promotion of the tourism products as well as printed 8 pricelists – 5 000 copies each.
- Internet page developed – a new products site
- Increased confidence in local residents that eco-tourism could be a true economic opportunity for them.
- Increased partnership opportunities, based on the mutual interests of the local people, the local authorities and the Pirin National Park.

Main Project Activities:

1. Information visits to the eight settlements included in the Project: A 4 day-stay in each settlement to review potential trails nearby, as well as suitable dwellings for tourist accommodation, other attractions and existing services.
2. Selection and marking/signposting of eco-trails: A 5-day stay in each settlement – 3 days for trail selection using expert advice; 2 more days for signposting with the help of volunteers.
3. Packaging tourist products: 3 days in each settlement – consultations for all interested in providing tourist services; detailed proposal for a two-day tourist program - weekend tour, developed and based on the already existing eco-trail.
4. Development of interpretative lectures and presentations for the eight trails: to be performed jointly by experts in bio-diversity and tourism.
5. Training of guides for the eco-trails: 13 persons would be trained as guides to the trails – one person for each settlement (for the corresponding trail) and 5 foreign language speaking students from Blagoevgrad (for all the trails).

6. Carrying out 'urgent improvements' in all eight settlements (as agreed upon with the local community): equipment and design of information points, with each village center.
7. 'Testing' of tourist products: 16 representatives of national media and tourist companies and their families – the first eco-tourists in the 8 settlements, participating in the Project.
8. Promotion of the finished tourist products: maps of each trail including description of the sites of interest; advertising leaflets for the weekend tours with indication of prices; presentation at two national tourist exchanges (Sofia and Varna); mailing to tour operators, banks, offices of international programs, etc.; web-site in Internet.

Partners:

1. The municipalities Simitli, Kresna, Strumiani, Sandanski, Gotse Delchev and Bansko
2. Pirin National Park

Project budget:

Required funds for:	(BGL)
1. Remunerations (salaries and honoraria)	36 011.00
2. Travel (transport, per diems, lodging)	12 727.00
3. Materials	900.00
4. Communications (telephone, email, internet, mailing exp.)	4 500.00
5. Administrative (office rental, office maintenance)	2 347.00
6. Specific (seminars, publications, equipment)	39 305.00
Total required funds BGL:	95 790.00

Financial Report - Cost accounting related to Project Design and Proposal Development

This organization was one of 12 innovative eco-tourism projects awarded 2000 BGL in October 2002, at the National Eco-tourism Forum. This money was used to develop their proposal, implementation schedule, and budget. The Project proposal summarized above was presented to more than 170 eco-tourism "stakeholders" in February 2003.

Project design costs include an accounting of the following categories:

Type of expense	Expenses (BGL)
1. Transportation	93.00
2. Per diem and meals	65.90
3. Accommodation	18.00
4. Communications	213.54
5. Office materials	1212.10
6. Consultant fees	400.00
Total in BGL	2002.54

Appendix 6

Media Coverage Report

ARD - Bulgaria
Biodiversity Conservation &
Economic Growth
Project
Sponsored by
USAID and the Government of Bulgaria

55 Parchevich Street, 3rd floor, 1000 Sofia

tel./fax: (+359 2) 986 7418; 986 3686; 986 3846; 980 7240

**Media Coverage Report
Of the National Ecotourism Meeting
11-12 February 2003**

The BCEG Project Communication Specialist worked in coordination with the three Press Offices of partner Ministries (Agriculture and Forests, Environment and Waters, Economy) to ensure Central Mass Media coverage of the National Ecotourism Meeting. In addition, the BCEG Project used well-developed relations with the “Green Media Machine” and with the journalists who covered the National Ecotourism Forum in October 2002.

The Campaign comprised the following **steps and activities**:

A. *Press Conference prior to the Meeting*

- The National Ecotourism Strategy Drafting Team gave a Press Conference at the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency Press Club, on 7 February. The three partnering ministries’ Press Offices formally announced the press conference.
- **Participants** – expert members of the Drafting Team: Dessislava Michalkova - expert from the Ministry of Economy, Raina Hardalova -expert from the Ministry of EW, Liubomir Popyordanov - representative of the Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism (BAAT), Simana Markovska - representative of the regional tourism association Pirin Tourism Forum, Andrey Goranov – representative of the Foundation for Local Government Reform; BCEG PMU.
- **The goal** was to present the purpose and the content of the National Ecotourism Meeting on 11-12 February and the content and process of development of the National Ecotourism Strategy.
- 24 journalists from Central Media attended. Invitation and the Press Release were sent to all 200 media subscribers of the Agency in country and abroad.

B. *Regular E-mailing of information*

A Press announcement, press release, invitations, the Ecotourism Meeting Program, and the synopsis of the twelve innovative ecotourism projects were sent electronically to 70 journalists from Central Media and the three partnering ministries Press Offices prior to the event.

C. *Provoked newspaper articles and broadcasts*

Interviews with members of the Drafting Team were provoked and organized by the BCEG Project Communication Specialist. Articles, TV and radio broadcasts were organized for the period between 6-14 February.

E. *Publishing information on web sites*

Information about the Meeting was published on the most popular Bulgarian news web sites: novinite.com (in English) and the BTA site, between the 7 to 12 February.

F. *Providing the journalists with materials and information during and after the Meeting*

The BCEG Project Communication Specialist worked on 11 and 12 February at Park Hotel Moskva, to provide journalists with information, materials and support in organizing meetings, interviews and production of articles and broadcasts.

Mass media coverage resulted in more than 1 hour and 40 minutes of aired TV and radio broadcasts and over 34 published newspaper and magazine articles. All of the registered broadcasts and articles are positive in tone and content.

This Media Coverage Report includes:

1. List of the aired TV and Radio Broadcasts
2. Lists of the registered articles by publication
3. Copies of the articles, BTA bulletins and the texts published on web sites
4. Texts of the Press Release and the Synopsis of the Awarded Projects

TV APPEARANCES AND RADIO BROADCASTS
Covering the National Ecotourism Meeting
11-12 February, 2003

Time and Date	TV Appearance / Radio Broadcast	Duration
7 February 8:03 a.m.	Announcement for the press conference in the prime morning news of Horizont Program of the Bulgarian National Radio /BNR/	30 seconds
7 February 11:20 a.m.	Interview with Simana Markovska, member of the National Ecotourism Strategy Drafting Team on Horizont Program of the BNR	6 minutes
7 February 7:40 a.m.	Live participation of Javor Stojanov, member of the National Ecotourism Strategy Drafting Team in the Morning Show of Evrocom TV	10 minutes
7 February 3:35 p.m.	Report from the press conference in the afternoon show of Darik Radio	4 minutes
7 February 4 p.m.	Report from the press conference in the specialized environment program of Radio Bulgaria, BNR	7 minutes
7 February 3:15 p.m.	Report from the press conference in the afternoon show of Horizont Program of the BNR	6 minutes
7 February 7:20 p.m.	Report from the press conference in the news of Evrocom TV	50 seconds
7 February 7:20 p.m.	Report from the press conference in the prime news of Seven Days TV	40 seconds
7 February 4:05 p. m.	Information in the news of Hristo Botev Program of the BNR	50 seconds
7 February 9:15 a. m.	Interview with the deputy Minister of Economy D. Hadjinikolov in the "Before Lunch" show of Horizont Program of the BNR	7 minutes
10 February 7:20 a.m.	Live participation of Kamelia Georgieva and Liubomir Popjordanov, members of the NEWG, in the Morning Show of the National TV	11 minutes
11 February 8:30 a.m.	Live participation of the deputy Minister of Economy D. Hadjinikolov and Liubomir Popjordanov, member of the National Ecotourism Strategy Drafting Team, in the Morning Show of bTV	10 minutes
11 February 6:20 p.m.	Interview with Kamelia Georgieva in the "Something more" evening program of Horizont, BNR	3 minutes
12 February 4:35 p.m.	Report from the meeting in the afternoon show of Horizont, BNR	6 minutes
13 February 3:00 p.m.	Report from the press conference in the "Sustainable Development" Program of the Hristo Botev Program of the BNR	12 minutes

ARTICLES

**Covering the National Ecotourism Meeting
11-12 February, 2003**

№	Publication	Date	Title
1.	Bulgarian Army Daily	10.02.03, page 16	Ecotourism – in Bulgaria of course
		12.02.03	Discussions over the National Ecotourism Strategy
2.	Cash Weekly	14.02.03, page 18	National Strategy will develop the Ecotourism the following 10 years
3.	Chernomorski Far Daily	11.02.03, page 23	National Ecotourism meeting on 11-12 February
4.	Dnevnik Daily	10.02.03, page 11	Strategy will develop the ecotourism in Bulgaria
		12.02.03, page 11, page 12 in English	Local eco tourism projects to receive international funding
		13.02.03, page 11	The Ecotourism will develop in 12 regions in the country
5.	Duma Daily	08.02.03, page 5	12 regions for Ecotourism in Bulgaria
6.	Factor Weekly	15-21.02.03, pages 16-17	Innovation ecotourism projects
7.	Monitor Daily	08.02.03, page 19	300 000 Euro income from rural tourism for 2002
8.	Novinar Daily	08.02.03, page 4	The EC gives money only for nature friendly tourism
9.	Pari Daily	10.02.03, page 32	Minister Arsenova and Debra McFarland are opening the National Ecotourism meeting
		11.02.03, page 2	First draft of the National Ecotourism Strategy
		12.02.03, page 2 12.02.03, page 20	Special Fund to Finance Environment Tourism
		17.02.03, page 27	The Ecotourism attracts rich clients
10.	Pari Plus Weekly	17.02.03, page 4	The First Ecotourism strategy in Europe
11.	Sega Daily	04.02.03, page 7	First draft of the Ecotourism strategy
		08.02.03, page 9	300 000 Euro income from ecotourism
		12.02.03, page 7	The Ministry of Finances is giving 12,5 million leva for park management

№	Publication	Date	Title
12.	Standard Daily	08.02.03, page 8	4000 foreign tourists had their holidays in our villages during 2002
		10.02.03, page 19	Bulgaria is divided in 12 eco zones
		12.02.03, page 10	15 million leva for the Parks
		14.02.03, page 9	To 300 000 Euro are given for rural tourism
13.	24 hours Daily	08.02.03, page 8	300 000 Euro spent for alternative tourism
14.	Vizh Daily	08.02.03, page 4	300 000 Euro income from rural tourism
15.	Zemia Daily	11.02.03, page 5	Searching money for Ecotourism
		12.02.03, page 5	The EU gives 10 million Euro for Ecotourism
16.	BTA Bulletin to all 200 media subscribers of the agency in Bulgaria and abroad	07.02.03	National Ecotourism meeting, 11-12 February 2003, Sofia
17.	Report from the press conference in the "Daily News" Publication of BTA which is published in English and goes to its all 200 subscribers in the country and abroad	11.02.03	National Ecotourism Strategy is under development
18.	www.novinite.com news service	11-12.02.03, in English	Bulgaria reviews National Ecotourism Strategy; Remark on National Ecotourism Strategy
19.	Odyssey Magazine	March, 2003	Bulgaria is First in Europe with its Ecotorism Strategy, Interview with Peter Hetz, BCEG Team Leader