

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



Marking of habitat trees (Photo: Green Balkans)

### Background

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

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

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

### Project

The aim of this project was to facilitate both protection and sustainable use of forests within Natura 2000 areas in Bulgaria. The target groups were all decision-makers involved in both the management of Natura 2000 sites and the preparation of forest management plans.

Knowledge transfer about sustainable forestry practices in Natura 2000 sites was arranged by workshops, trainings, and a study tour to Germany. A model approach for integrating Natura 2000 requirements into forest management was developed and successfully implemented in two forestry units in Smolyan. For a selected Natura 2000 site the project demonstrated how a citizens' group bringing together relevant stakeholders can be established to support Natura 2000 management. Thereby the project facilitated a process to build local capacities for the management of Natura 2000 areas. Knowledge transfer with regards to the identification and marking of habitat trees led to the implementation of a pilot activity.

The project results have been compiled and edited in order to make them available beyond the region of Smolyan. Specific results will be considered during the revision of the existing legislation for the elaboration of forestry management plans.

- Target country/region: Smolyan, Bulgaria
- Duration: 09/2011 – 09/2013
- Beneficiary: RIEW Smolyan, RFD Smolyan, State Forest Units, municipal administrations, local conservation organisations, forest owners, local companies
- Implementing organisations: EuroNatur, [www.euronatur.org](http://www.euronatur.org), Green Balkans, [www.greenbalkans.org](http://www.greenbalkans.org)
- Project number: FKZ 380 01 266