

Natura 2000 and tourism development

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Within the legislative framework of the European Union in scope of sector Protection of Nature the Community has adopted two main documents for regulation on conservation of species and nature habitats. These are Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds, known as the Birds Directive and the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora, called the EC Habitats Directive.

The main objective of this international initiative is to assist in conservation of biodiversity, taking into account local economic, cultural and regional characteristics. Both directives are considered as an incentive for the implementation of the concept for sustainable development. The European Community, which is a signatory of the Bern Convention ensures the fulfilment of the obligations therein on the basis of both directives by setting legislative requirements for the establishment of a European ecological network called NATURA 2000.

NATURA 2000 represents an ecological network of protected areas. It is an instrument of the EU for conservation of the natural habitats as well as of species, important for the Community. It is an obligation for each of the member-states in the EU to build the network within the boundaries of its territory in accordance with the Bird and Habitats Directives. By means of NATURA 2000, the EU takes part in the implementation of the ecological network EMERALD, in respect of the Bern Convention, which comprises of Europe and some countries in North Africa. The establishment of NATURA 2000 within the territory of Bulgaria is among the key engagements of the government in respect of the country's accession to the EU.

This paper analyses the achieved results in the field as well as the problems arising from the connection of the network with the tourism resources in Bulgaria. Some recommendations are made intended for the countries of the Balkan Peninsula in regard with their future accession to the European Union.

Keywords: NATURA 2000, Birds Directive, Habitats Directive, EMERALD ecological network, Bern Convention