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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
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**Group of Specialists  
on the European Diploma of Protected Areas  
24 March 2014, Strasbourg**

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**APPRAISAL REPORT  
Central Balkan National Park  
(Bulgaria)**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The European Diploma was awarded in 2009 to the CBNP with conditions and recommendations. The 2013 appraisal mission was organized in order to renew the Diploma after 5 years for a period of 10 years. It was the opportunity to check the progress regarding the conditions and recommendations of the 2008 appraisal, as well as to identify successes, recurrent issues and new problems. The mission was well organized by the Central Balkan National Park administration and was completed with a visit to the Ministry of Environment and Water in Sofia.



The Central Balkan NP is one of the 3 well established NPs in Bulgaria. It covers an area of 72'021 ha and belongs to IUCN cat II. It is located in the central part of the Stara Planina mountain range, which runs from West to East from the Serbian border to the Black sea coast, parallel to the Danube. It was designed in 1991 around 9 strict nature reserves established during the communist time and was reclassified as National Park in 1999, following the adoption of the Bulgarian Protected Areas act which divides protected areas in categories taken from the IUCN management categories system. The whole territory is "exclusive state property", which corresponds to the requirement for a National Park according to the Bulgarian legislation. The Park has not changes since the previous mission in 2008.

The park is holding since 2003 the PANParks certificate, which was renewed in 2010. Four of the 9 strict reserves are on the world list of the UNESCO MaB Biosphere Reserves since the early 80's. The Park and its surrounding area is part of the Natura 2000 network. Discussions are currently taking place to include some of the best preserved forest into the Beech Forest World Heritage property (extension of the existing property).

The Park is managed by a team of more than 70 people with a directorate located in Gabrovo, on the Northern side of the mountain, outside of the Park territory. The former Director, Nela Rachewitz, has left her position last year after 16 years to become deputy mayor of the town of Gabrovo. She was replaced temporarily by the deputy-director, but all the directors of the Regional structures of the Ministry of Environment, including the NP directorates, were laid off on August 1st, 2013; the procedure for selection of new directors has started at the end of September. One of the senior park staff is currently acting director, but with very limited responsibilities. This situation is linked to the political turmoil which unfortunately characterizes Bulgaria today.

A management plan, prepared in the late 90's, was adopted in 2001 for a 10 years period. Its renewal is currently underway. The public hearing should take place at the end of 2013 or early in 2014 and the Plan should be adopted by the Council of Minister shortly afterwards.

The expert wishes to express his gratitude to the park collaborators who have been involved in the preparation and execution of the mission. They have answered to all our questions as well as they could, despite the difficult administrative situation of the Park. A field visit was organized; it allowed to see some of the recently renewed visitors infrastructure and to discuss the pasture management which appears to be the most crucial issue for the time being.

## 2. CHARACTERISTICS, NATURAL AND CULTURAL VALUES

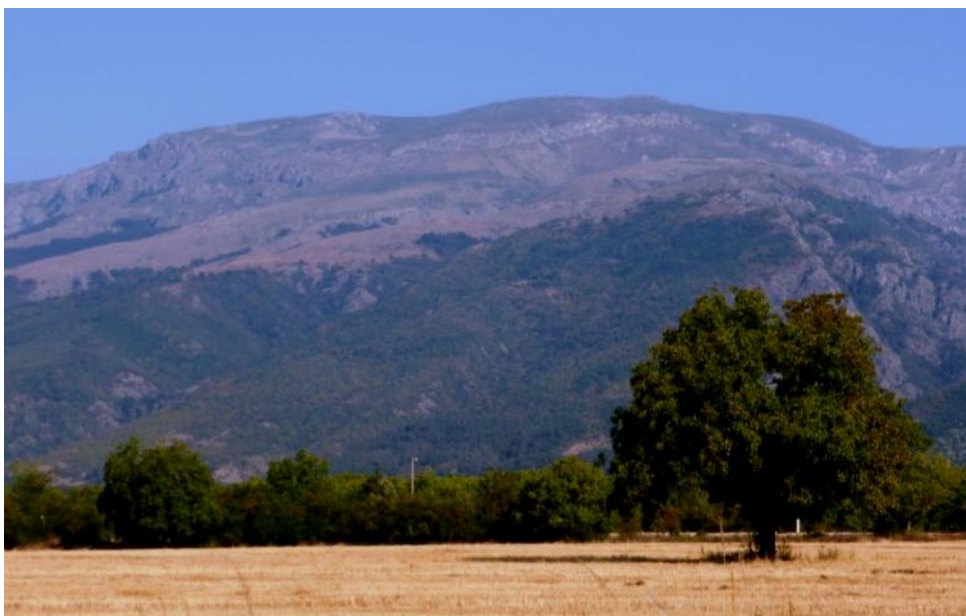
The Park covers the Central part of the Stara Planina mountains, which is a long and narrow mountain range encompassing a few peaks over 2000 m; the highest point, Botev Peak, reaches 2376 m and dominates the Thracian plain some 1500 m below to the south. On the northern side the slopes are less steep and several lower mountains ranges separate the main ridge from the Danube plain. Due to this geomorphologic situation, the Park is a narrow stripe some 80 km long, with a width varying from 4 to 12 km. The Bulgarian Protected areas act has no provision for a buffer zone, which means that development areas, without protective measures, are close to the heart of the Park and even touch some of the strict protected areas.



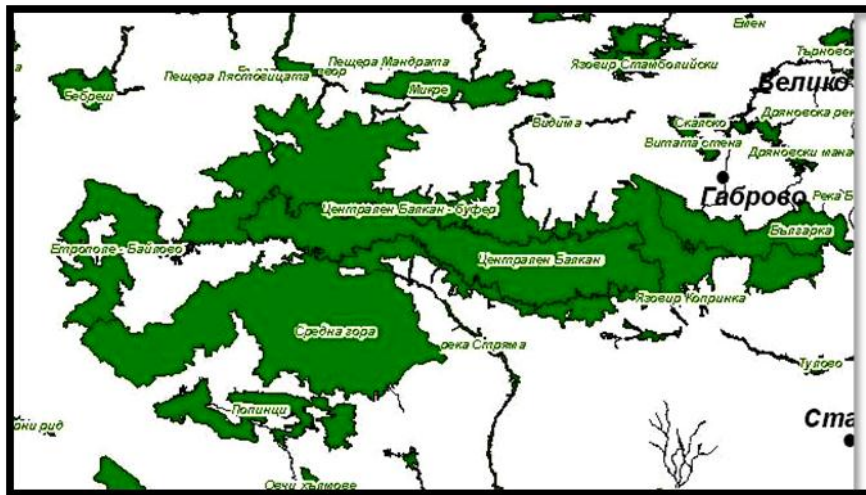
Map of the Central Balkan National Park showing the following areas:

- Strict nature reserves (orange)
- Forests (dark green)
- Highland meadows (yellow-green)

The 9 strict reserves cover mostly the forest zone, while human traditional activities (summer grazing, aromatic and medicinal plant collection, etc.) occur in the high altitude treeless areas and lower slopes.



The Park perimeter has not changed since the last visit. A buffer zone exists « de facto » in the form of a large Natura 2000 ("Central Balkan buffer") zone around the Park (see map), but is not officially recognized as such. The Park is also a Natura 2000 zone; it has been declared as such under the Bird directive while the procedure under the Habitat directive is currently under way.



## 2.1 Geology and hydrology

Most of the Park lies on granite and crystalline schist; a much smaller area is located on limestone with some typical karstic features (caves, etc.).

The main ridge marks the limit between the Danube / Black Sea watershed on the north (352 km<sup>2</sup>) and the Aegean Sea watershed on the south (343 km<sup>2</sup>). The park constitutes a valuable reserve for drinking water; a few rivers have been used for hydroelectric production, but no large dams have been constructed in the Park or in the adjacent areas. There are many gorges and cliffs which host interesting plant and animal communities and are naturally protected.

## 2.2 Vegetation

Roughly 2/3 of the Park is covered by forests on both side of the range. The forest are extremely diversified on the southern slope; they consist almost exclusively in east European and sub-Mediterranean broad leaf species and are replaced at higher elevation by more typical central European species. Conifers are almost completely lacking, with the exception of a few pine plantations. It must be noted that in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century most of the southern slopes were largely deforested, which provoked many landslides and floods in the towns on the foothill of the range. Large reforestation programmes have been implemented already before the Second World War to protect the soils on the slopes and the settlements below.

The northern side is largely covered by beech forests, in a mixture with other broad-leaves species at low elevation (oak, hornbeam, maples, etc.), but in very large and well preserved almost pure stands at mid elevation. A few stands of conifers can be found near tree line on the northern slopes. On both sides the strict nature reserves hosts large forest stands that are very well preserved, some of them being almost virgin.

Very large areas on the upper plateaus and on some of the southern slopes have been deforested and transformed into pasture areas. Many centuries of intensive grazing have maintained this open landscape and have significantly contributed to the high biodiversity. After centuries of stability, since the early 90's several rapid changes in the framework conditions, e.g. the national and European subsidies policy for pastoralism, have generated serious threats regarding the pastures conservation.

## 2.3 Fauna

The dense and well preserved forests offer still suitable habitats for large carnivores, in particular wolves and brown bears, as well as for some rare bird species. More open areas offer a suitable habitat for many invertebrate and smaller vertebrate species (butterflies, beetles, grasshoppers, micro-mammals, birds, etc). 18 species of bats can be found on the park territory and ungulates are well present (chamois, red and roe deer).

A good monitoring is in place for large mammals, 14 species of birds, etc.. The results of the last years' counting are encouraging ; the number of chamois grew from 60-80 in 2000 to more than 250 currently. Bird populations are also growing. Four places for reintroduction of Griffon Vultures have been established in Stara Planina mountain (one site near the National Park) but animals are not yet fully « wild ». (Life project conducted by Green Balkan). Some restocking of *Trutta fario* have taken place in the rivers. A brown bear study with 2 animals equipped with collars has been done.

## 2.4 Cultural heritage

The park and its surrounding are rich in elements of cultural heritage, starting from the Thracian fortresses and followed by Roman roads and other landmarks. The area had been marked by the national liberation movement against the Turkish Empire and the Russian-Turkish war. Several monuments commemorate these events and their leaders. Many monasteries and traditional settlements can be visited and traditional craft is still present. Several villages have been well preserved and function as "living ethnographic museums".

## 3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

### 3.1 Agriculture – sheep and cattle grazing, medicinal plants and berries collection

There is no permanent settlement within the Park but a few shelters and huts are used during the summer by the shepherds. Summer grazing in the high mountain meadows has been a traditional activity which constituted one of the most significant life support for the populations on both side of the mountains. A dramatic drop of domestic animal numbers, and in consequence of summer grazing, occurred in the early 90's, following the political changes and the land restitution to private owners outside the park. Lack of grazing has been clearly identified as a major threat for biodiversity, many pasture areas being colonized by junipers and other low shrubs (heath, *Vaccinium* spp.) with a threat of returning eventually to forests if no appropriate measure is taken. Sheep grazing is still dominant, though cattle and also horse grazing is getting more and more common.

New schemes for subsidies have been recently tested by the Bulgarian government for grazing in mountain areas. EU funding is used to support farmers bringing domestic animals in the upland pastures in summer. Pirin and Central Balkan national parks have been selected as test areas (Rural Development Programme, Ms214 "agri-environmental payments", Direction "Pastoralism") for the period 2007 - 2013. The level of the subsidies have made mountain grazing very attractive, after 2 decades of pasture abandoning. The quotas (carrying capacity) fixed in the 2001 Management Plan have been reached, and the demand is still growing.

Collection of medicinal plants is limited due to the absence of market. Berries picking happens every year, with different intensity related to the berries production. The impact is coming rather from the « collateral damages » (camping, fires, vehicles traffic) than from the picking itself.

### 3.2 Tourism

Hiking has always been quite popular in the park area. Some 20 mountain huts, or "chalets", are more or less regularly spaced along the ridge and a dense network of marked trails is maintained. These infrastructures have been established and maintained during the communist period by a centralized organization, the Bulgarian Tourist Union; after the changes, the organization was split into local (municipal) chapters and the huts were given to the respective municipalities, according to their location, but the land still belong to the State. There is a serious lack of funding for their maintenance and renovation. The management of these huts is a real issue; problems start with the clarification of property rights and the legislative situation which prevents the Park to perform economic activities. There is need for funding for their renovation and maintenance, especially regarding the energy supply, the wastes and waste water management, etc. There are no taxes on tourism; the only tax perceived by the Park is the very small (symbolic) tax for summer pasture use, wood and medicinal plant collection.

For the time being the tourist activities can still be qualified of "soft" or "green". The development of the villages and the construction of tourist complexes near the park borders, which were a serious concern 5 years ago, have been stopped, mainly for economic reasons. On the other hand, there is a recurrent request for opening some of the Park's roads to tourist traffic.

In some areas close to towns or villages, the park has developed during the last few years several eco-trails offering the possibility for visitors and local people to discover and enjoy some wild nature. Some of the activities offered are particularly popular among school children and teenagers. The main nature trail near Kalofer (southern slope) has been very recently completely renovated et re-equipped.



### 3.3 Regional development and land use

The Park still suffers from the absence of buffer zones, which do not exist in the Bulgarian legislation. The narrow shape of the Park has for consequences that new activity developments along the northern border might have an influence on a very large proportion of the Park. Some of the strict reserves reach the border of the Park itself and might be directly exposed to impacts. The adoption of the European bird and habitat directives will certainly contribute to mitigate this problem. A large zone around the Park is currently designated as Natura 2000 and a management plan should be prepared in a near future.

Development projects for new skiing areas, which were a serious concern 5 years ago, have been stopped, again for economic reasons. Windmills are not allowed in the Park; currently they are not financially competitive, thus the risk is low. Bulgaria has no intention of closing its Nuclear power plant, but is planning a new one!

## 4. CONSERVATION STATUS

In general the park, its habitats, species and landscape are very well preserved. The network of strict nature reserves, despite the lack of connectivity in some cases, is securing the conservation of the most valuable pristine ecosystems. The Protected Areas act provides all the necessary provisions for ensuring the conservation of the park's values; however the necessary human and financial resources must be provided by the State in order to enforce these laws and to implement the management plan. The current level of financing is not sufficient to ensure quality management operation and infrastructure maintenance.

### 4.1 Forest zones

A large part of the forest has been exploited, but very few monospecific plantations have taken place. Most forests have more or less natural composition. Very valuable old growth and probably close to pristine forests have been preserved by the establishment of the strict nature reserves. A few plantations of conifers have been done, but mostly outside the Park borders. Several forest exploitations with large clear-cut surfaces have taken place just outside the park; the absence of buffer zone has lead to a striking difference in landscape conservation in and outside the park.

Shepherds have the permission to take a small amount of wood for their daily uses when attending domestic animals in summer. Illegal logging occurs very sporadically but to a limited extend.

#### 4.2 Pasture areas – treeless zone

The mountain pasture areas have been certainly gained on the forest and have been maintained by many centuries of pastoralism. A significant part of the biodiversity is the results of this century old tradition which has to be maintained in order to preserve the rich biodiversity. In that sense a significant part of the Park could be qualified of "managed protected area". The studies made during the preparation of the management plan have demonstrated the absolute necessity to maintain a sufficient grazing pressure on the treeless zones in order to ensure the maintenance of their diversity. As soon as the pressure decreases, the pastures are colonized by junipers and other species of the heath family which replace the grasses. Once junipers and other shrubs are established, it becomes extremely difficult or even impossible to go back to grassland; rapidly tree seedlings start growing and the return to forest seems unavoidable.



Since 2007, the introduction of the EU subsidies for pastoralism has dramatically changed the situation. A renewed interest for sheep and cattle grazing was observed. Summer grazing permits are issued by the park. However the control of the grazing (duration, number of animals, intensity) is difficult. Therefore the ideal carrying capacity is hard to determine and should be the object of further studies.

For the time being tourist activities have only very limited impact on the grazing areas. Medicinal and aromatic plant collection varies quite significantly from one year to the next, depending upon the demand from the pharmaceutical industry. Berry collection is quite popular, but is authorized only during a limited period of time. The impact results mainly from the number of people getting access to the meadow areas with vehicles and staying there for several days.

#### 4.3 Forest fires, natural hazard and erosion

There have been only a few forest fires over the last few years. The general policy is to intervene in all zones of the park, including in the strict nature reserves. The authorities want to avoid the spreading of the fire to other parts of the Park.

There is a programme for anti-erosion measures (wood or stone construction, damage repair). Work has been conducted in particular in the Botev Peak area.



## 5. MANAGEMENT OF THE PARK

In general the Central Balkan National Park is well managed by a competent directorate with a staff of some 75 people. Management is based on a 10 years management plan adopted in 2001 and other strategic documents.

### 5.1 Management Plan and Park regulations

The management plan was prepared in the mid-90s. The MP itself was officially adopted in 2001; it covers a 10 years period, with possible revision every 4 years. Each year the Park Directorate prepares an action plan submitted to the National Nature Protection Service.

The procedure has started to prepare a new plan, but some administrative conditions not fulfilled have lead to some delay. The first part (Descriptive) of the Plan is ready. According to the contract for second part (Prescriptive), signed on September 9th, the task should be performed within 6 months, including the public hearing. The final version must then be adopted by the Council of Ministers. There will be strong pressure to increase the charge in cattle grazing, as well as for public use of park roads. The problem of off-road vehicles will be a very delicate issue.

The zoning is likely to remain the same, while some conditions might be changed (grazing carrying capacity, etc.) Only 7 roads are open to public within the Park; however there is a permanent request for opening to public other existing roads, currently reserved to the park administration, emergency situations and some users (mountain huts, shepherds). Repeated requests have been presented in order to have access to the Botev peak (highest point of the Park) from both sides (tourism organizations). Another recurrent issue is the widespread use of off-road vehicles; those do not need registration in Bulgaria and are therefore very difficult to identify. Moreover the park peoples have not the power to intervene.

### 5.2 Personal and budgets

The Central Balkan National Park Directorate is a regional authority of the MoEW appointed for the management and control of the Park. The park territory is divided in 7 sections; 3 of them are located on the N side, 4 on the S. Each team is constituted of 5-8 rangers under the authority of a Park Inspector. Several specialized senior and junior expert are attached to the Directorate for duties covering the whole Park (GIS, monitoring, tourism, etc.) The whole staff is about 75 people. Regular operational budget is provides by the State. This regular yearly budget (for hiring staff) is stable or has decreased slightly. Tourist infrastructures (ecotrails, signs, etc.) have been renovaded and secured, but special structures to mark entrances to the park have still to be established. Most of this work has been made possible by the EU environmental programme. Note: this programme concerns mainly the waste water treatment and waste management, but a small amount is reserved for biodiversity. The application procedure is very heavy; the human resources are not sufficient to be able to use the whole amount of available money. There are plans for 3 information centers: Vezhen Chalet, Southern access to Troyan Pass, Park entrance near Tazha.

### 5.3 Park governance

Advisory council: 12 members from Tourism, Tourist Union, Municipalities, Scientist, Shepherds, NGOs MoEW, PAN Parks partners; they meet at least twice a year.

Scientific council: 12 members from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Natural History Museum and Universities. The council members have been associated to the preparation of the new MP; they are supportive to the Park administration.

### 5.4 Relations with local communities

Relations with local communities appear to be quite good. The Park is now relatively well accepted; however some regional expectations for rapid development could be in contradiction with the park's conservation goals, but the current economic crisis has stopped most of the potentially damaging projects.

The shepherds through their associations are trying to obtain a raise of the upper limit in number of animals as set in the Management Plan. The tourist organization request the opening of some of the roads to private traffic.



## **6. CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT CURRENT ISSUES**

During the meetings with the park directorate, the National nature protection service and representatives from NGOs, and based on our personal knowledge of the park and its functioning, a few major issues were identified. The pasture management (postoralism subsidies), the administrative problems of the park and the renewal of the management plan are the most serious ones.

### **6.1 Management and Management Plan renewal**

The Management Plan adopted in 2001 has allowed the Park management to preserve the Park integrity and its value. The delay in the preparation of a new plan is not a real problem, but the uncertainty regarding the future plan is not very encouraging. The general political instability leaves the door open to negative changes of the park's regulation under short-term political pressure. The situation is similar in the 2 other national parks, whose Management plans are also due to renewal. The lay off of the national parks directors at this crucial moment is not encouraging.

The short deadline will render impossible proper negotiations with the local authorities and other stakeholders. Great pressure can be expected during the public hearing and after it, before the government signature. Several key issues are not directly under the control of the Ministry of Environment and water, like the grazing which depends upon subsidies allocated by the EU through the Ministry of Agriculture. A meeting between the 2 Ministers has already lead to a declaration that "parks regulation will be modified with the new Management Plan" (but without any precision).

## 6.2 Pasture pressure on mountain and subalpine meadows

Summer grazing is definitely the issue #1 for the park management. From the political changes in 90 – 92 until 2007, the problem was the underuse of the mountain pasture (lack of grazing) with dramatic consequences on the quality of the pastures (grassland replaced by junipers and other small shrubs). With the introduction in 2007 of EU agri-environmental measures on pastoralism, in the form of subsidies for summer grazing in mountain areas, the situation is completely different. The Central Balkan Park was chosen as test area for these measures; they have then been extended to the other national parks. The current scheme ends this year and a new scheme should be implemented in 2014. There is already a pressure from the shepherds association, supported by local authorities, to increase the upper limit of animal charge set in the Management Plan.

For Central Balkan, the number of sheep in Summer has grown from 7'800 in 2007 to 20'800 currently and the demand is still growing. The procedures for attribution of the pasture right and their controlling are very bad, taking a lot of working forces from the park administration, with little or no possibility to really assess in the field the ecological impact. The contracts are too short (limited to 1 year), the plots attributed by the MoA are not identical to those recorded by the park (different GIS systems, not fully compatible). The tax was fixed 20 years ago and has not been adapted; it is considered as symbolic.

A study on their impact of the grazing increase since 2007 is currently ongoing as part of a project supported by Switzerland (contribution to EU enlargement). It is run by the Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation and has already produced some results. A team has been analyzing the aerial photos from 2006 (before the introduction of the pastoralism measures) and 2012. A report will be delivered by the end of 2013 and an action plan will be proposed in 2014. In summary it appears that the upper limit of animal number has been reached; it corresponds to the limit set up in the management Plan. The increase number of horses, grazing without control, is a problem. The rarefaction of the water sources leads to high concentration of animals in some areas, with damage to the soil and vegetation.

During a meeting with the shepherds association in Kalofer, several requests were presented:

- Extension of the contracts to several years
- Rehabilitation of the infrastructures (shelters, dairies)
- Improvement and increase of the number of water sources
- Allowing goat grazing (legally forbidden in the National Parks)
- Attribution of grazing surface only to animal owners, with preference for local people

Most of these demands concur with the conclusions of the environmental study, with the exception of the goat grazing, and providing that the actual carrying capacity is not extended.

The main obstacle for a good management comes from the system of one-year concessions which is very much time consuming and does not allow any investment from the shepherds' side. As an example, due to the lack of proper infrastructures allowing cheese making, the shepherds bring their animal to the mountain only late in the season, when the sheep have stopped producing milk.

## 6.3 Harmonization of international designations

Four international designations have been awarded to the Central Balkan national Park:

- Biosphere reserves
- PAN Parks
- European Diploma
- Natura 2000

... and discussion are ongoing regarding a 5th one:

- Natural World Heritage

The four strict nature reserves recognized as UNESCO biosphere reserves are actually strict nature reserves without any human activities whatsoever. They therefore do not correspond at all to the current concept of Biosphere Reserves (Sevilla Strategy). The state of Bulgaria has the obligation to reform its biosphere reserve system in order to implement the Sevilla; this has been on the agenda now for more than 10 years without any progress. Some promises to address this issue 5 years ago, together

with the designation of the Natura 2000 area as buffer zone to the park, have not been transformed into action.

Moreover a recent initiative for the extension of the World Heritage Beech Forest property<sup>1</sup> to Romania, Bulgaria and former Yugoslavian countries had lead the Bulgarian State Party to include parts of the Central Balkan NP as Bulgarian contribution to this extension. This would just add the confusion and create total misunderstanding among the local authorities and the general public regarding international designations and especially the UNESCO sites.

The PAN Parks certification was due to renewal in 2008 but was postponed due to the lack of financing. It was finally renewed in 2011 but under special conditions.

*Note: in general we consider that a new international designation should be attributed only if the already existing ones are properly implemented or if a significant effort is done in that direction and if the different designations are harmonized and compatible.*

## **7. REVIEW OF THE 2008 CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### Conditions

- *the authorities responsible must express their commitment not to alter the management plan and the conservation regime of the different zones of the park and to renew the plan respecting similar conservation conditions;*

For the time being, the MP adopted in 2001 has not been altered; however there are serious concerns regarding its renewal, currently underway. Therefore we suggest to attach again this condition to the renewal.

- *the authorities concerned must provide a sufficient budget to ensure regular operation of the park as well as maintenance of its infrastructure;*

A regular budget has been provided; it is stable, or slightly decreasing. In addition large funds are available from the money provided by the EU. The main need consists in sufficient human resources paid by the regular budget in order to prepare and execute projects with EU financing. We therefore suggest to maintain this request but as a recommendation

- *a public advisory council should be established in order to ensure public participation in the management of the park;*

This condition was fulfilled; the Council meets regularly.

### Recommendations

1. *a buffer zone around the park should be established (conformity with the zone, limited impact on forest and agricultural land, protection of water, etc.); the obligation to implement the Natura 2000 network, as prescribed by the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) in the national park and its buffer zone should be acknowledged;*

Formally there is still no buffer zone, but the implementation of the Natura 2000 is ongoing. A large zone includes the surrounding areas on both side. It should function as buffer zone, but this will be clear only after adoption of the Management plans for the Park and for the Natura 2000 site. Both plans must be closely coordinated to be allow a really efficient management.

2. *no mass tourism activities in contradiction with the sustainable development principles should be authorized in the park;*

The most threatening projects (resort building, opening of skiing areas) are currently stopped, because of the financial crisis. They might be reactivated if the economic situation improves in the future.

3. *well-managed summer grazing should be encouraged; a monitoring programme to determine the ideal number of animals permitted in order to respect biodiversity should be established; the possibility of controlling juniper and other shrub growth by means other than fire should be studied;*

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<sup>1</sup> Currently the transnational property includes elements in Ukraine, Slovakia and Germany

Though the threat has changed from underuse to overgrazing, the future of the pastures is the issue # 1 for the coming years. This recommendation must be maintained and partially transformed in a condition for renewal.

4. *the situation of the buildings within the park should be clarified and the necessary means to maintain or improve them should be ensured, as appropriate.*

The situation of the building is relatively clear, but the need for proper maintenance is still present. The current system of property and management is obviously inadequate and new distribution of tasks and responsibilities should be explored.



## 8. CONCLUSIONS, CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The general ecological condition of the Park is good; in some areas the situation has improved; however there are strong concerns regarding the future, due namely to:

- a) The political instability of the national parks and the country in general
- b) The uncertainty regarding the new Management plan and its future content
- c) The threats regarding the renewal of the pastoralism measures and their implementation in high mountain protected areas
- d) The lack of coordination between the different designation and their improper use

As a general conclusion, and based on the document provided, the field visits and the meetings with a wide range of stakeholders, we recommend the group of experts to support the renewal of the European Diploma for Central Balkan National Park, **but only for a limited period of 2-3 years**; renewal for the regular 10 years period should be given only after fulfilling of several conditions and recommendations.

### 8.1 Conditions

- Finalize and approved a new management plan as soon as possible, with no alteration of the conservation regime in the different zones of the Park and with similar conservation conditions. In particular it should not allow an increase of the overall capacity for summer grazing and continue to forbid goat grazing in the Park as well as commercial timber.
- Change the regulations regarding the EU subsidies for the next period, starting 2014, in order to make them compatible with the new Management Plan.

- Finalize the designation of Natura 2000 areas around the Park following the Bird and habitat directives, and adopt a management plans for the areas located in Stara Planina which must be coordinated with the Management Plan of the National Park

## 8.2 Recommendations

- Reestablish a Park directorate with a Director as soon as possible and secure a regular budget for the coming years
- Take the necessary measures to harmonize the international designations before applying for a new category; in particular modify the design of the Biosphere reserves to make them fully operational and compatible with the Seville strategy or take the necessary steps to remove them from the UNESCO MaB list.
- Modify the conditions for summer grazing in the park; make the necessary changes in order to allow long-term pasture concession and set up a programme for renovation of the corresponding infrastructures (shelters, dairies, etc.).
- Provide new water sources or rehabilitate and increase the capacity of existing ones in order to avoid erosion caused by daily large concentrations of cattle around them. Study the possibility for controlling the growth of the Junipers without burning them.
- Continue to support the ongoing study of the grazing impact in the Park and implement its conclusions and recommendations
- Undertake negotiations with the Bulgarian Tourist Union regarding the maintenance and improvement of the mountain huts; look at their ecological impact, especially regarding the energy and water supply, as well as the waste and waste water management.

## APPENDICES

### PEOPLE MET DURING THE MISSION

Anton Stanchev: Director of Biodiversity Control and Guarding Directorate, Central Balkan NP

Gencho Iliev: Senior Expert in Biodiversity Plans and Projects Department, Central Balkan NP

Rumen Stoyanov: Mayor of Kalofer

Darina Shishkova: Head of the Association of breeders of native sheep breeds in Bulgaria – Kalofer

Nela Rachevitz: Deputy Mayor of Gabrovo Municipality

Vladimir Milushev: Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation

Dimitar Stoev: Chief of Protected areas Department, MoEW

Tzvetelina Ivanova: State Expert in Protected areas Department, MoEW

### PROGRAMME OF THE MISSION

Sunday, 01.09	Travel Corcelles - Zurich - Sofia. Transfer from Sofia airport to Gabrovo (park main office)
Monday, 02.09	meetings with the park staff in the office in Gabrovo
Tuesday, 03.09	Travelling to Kalofer to meet with the local shepherd's association and the mayor of Kalofer (member of the association too), Visit of the renovated eco-trail near Kalofer. Overview of the subalpine pastures near the Troyan Pass.
Wednesday, 04.09	Morning - meeting with ex director of the park who is a vice mayor of Gabrovo now and final meeting at the park HQ; afternoon - meeting with the representatives of Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation; discussion of the study on grazing impact in the Park; travelling to Sofia
Thursday, 05.09	meeting with representatives of the National nature protection services and Natura 2000 directorates in the Ministry of Environment and Water, Sofia.
Friday, 06.09	Return to Switzerland