

# **CONCEPT FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF PRIORITY AXIS 3 “PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF BIODIVERSITY” OF OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME ENVIRONMENT, 2007-2013**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Background**

Bulgaria is one of the richest countries in Europe in terms of biodiversity. Its relatively small territory spreads over parts of three biogeographical regions – the Alpine, the Black Sea and the Continental. The varied relief and geology, the specific microclimate conditions, and the millenniums of human activity on the territory of the country have brought about the wide variety of species, communities and natural habitats, most of which are of conservation significance. About 1/3 of Europe’s natural habitats and species needing conservation are met in Bulgaria.

### **2. Regulatory framework**

The anthropogenic effect leads to loss and fragmentation of many habitats in Europe and places many rare species in a higher danger of extinction. In the issue of actions to preserve natural heritage and attain the sustainable development objectives, Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive) and Directive 79/409/EEC (2009/147/EC) on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive) play a major role in European policy. Both directives aim to preserve biodiversity through the creation of a network of protected areas and zones under the title NATURA 2000.

To date, the national legislation is fully aligned with the provisions of the two EU directives. The Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive were transposed with the Biological Diversity Act and the relevant subordinate legislation. The protected areas network is almost completed; the national lists of protected areas have been approved by the Council of Ministers and by the European Commission. Near completion is also the process of drafting and issuing the orders designating the special protection areas for wild birds.

The general regulatory framework for the protection and use of the respective biological resources and of the biological diversity is established by the sectoral legislation dealing both with natural biological resources and with those cultivated by man (Protected Areas Act, Biological Diversity Act, Agricultural Land Conservation Act, Agricultural Land Ownership and Use Act, Protection of New Plant Varieties and Animal Breeds Act, Forests Act, Hunting and Game Keeping Act, Fisheries and Aquaculture Act, Veterinary Practices Act, etc).

### **3. Tasks of the current mechanism**

To promote the preservation of biological diversity in Bulgaria and towards implementation of the relevant activities stemming from the commitments undertaken under the EU Accession Treaty, Operational Programme Environment, 2007 – 2013 (OPE) includes Priority Axis 3 “Preservation and restoration of biodiversity”. In view of the key role of the European environmental network NATURA 2000 in Community policy, OPE is focused on the support of activities for creation and maintenance of the network. The program aims to protect natural habitats and the habitats of plant and animal species through development, update and implementation of the management plans for the protected areas of NATURA 2000, as well as of biodiversity preservation measures that are not included in the plans.

Financed are also activities necessary to manage protected areas in accordance with the Protected Areas Act (PAA) and activities to achieve favourable conservation status of habitats and species within and outside the management plans, as well as activities for sustainable use of resources.

The present document aims mainly to improve the management of OPE Priority Axis 3 and to promote the preservation and restoration of species and natural habitats included in the national environmental network of protected areas and protected zones under NATURA 2000 by procuring funding for the national measures having priority in terms of compliance with the NATURA 2000 implementation deadlines. According to the Habitats Directive, in 2013 Bulgaria is to report to the European Commission on the measures taken under the Directive (six years after accession date).

## **II. CHALLENGES FACED IN IMPLEMENTING THE BIODIVERSITY LEGISLATION**

The National Biodiversity Conservation Plan, 2005-2010 outlines some major problems encountered in implementing the legislation on the preservation of biodiversity in Bulgaria, namely:

- Man-caused degradation, fragmentation and loss of habitats;
- Significant delay in the implementation of Directive 92/43/EEC, as regards the creation of the European network NATURA 2000;
- Underefficiency and underintensity of implementation of preventive measures to preserve biodiversity;
- Natural vulnerability of species and habitats;
- Inadequate public support for preservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of resource;
- Lack of administrative capacity of the state and municipal authorities to implement biodiversity policies and lack of clarity on the obligations and responsibilities of the different levels;
- Insufficient number of research works and projects for the biological heritage of the country and for the modern methods of its conservation in accordance with the economic, social and cultural conditions;
- Limited financial resources for biodiversity preservation activities.

## **III. IMPLEMENTATION OF PRIORITY AXIS 3 TO DATE**

Total 6 calls for proposals have been announced under OPE Priority Axis 3 “Preservation and restoration of biodiversity”:

- **BG161PO005/08/3.0/01/05 Preservation and restoration of biodiversity in the Republic of Bulgaria (a competition-based procedure for all eligible beneficiaries under Priority Axis 3)** – 8 grant award orders of the Minister of Environment and Water have been issued and 16 grant award contracts have been signed (1 grant award order – RIEW Pleven – was cancelled);
- **BG161PO005/09/3.1/01/08 Development of NATURA 2000 network (direct award procedure with specific beneficiary the National Nature Protection Service (NNPS) Directorate within MOEW)** - 3 grant award orders of the Minister of Environment and Water have been issued;
- **BG161PO005/09/3.2/04/12 Update of Central Balkan National Park Management Plan (a direct grant procedure with specific beneficiary the Central Balkan National Park Directorate)** – a grant award order of the Minister of Environment and Water has been issued;

- **BG161PO005/09/3.2/01/09 Update of Rila National Park Management Plan (a direct grant procedure with specific beneficiary the Rila National Park Directorate)** - a grant award order of the Minister of Environment and Water has been issued;
- **BG161PO005/09/3.2/02/10 Development of Bulgarka Natural Park Management Plan (a direct grant procedure with specific beneficiary – Bulgarka National Park)** – signing of a grant award contract is pending;
- **BG161PO005/09/3.2/03/11 Development of Belasitsa Natural Park Management Plan (a direct grant procedure with specific beneficiary the Belasitsa National Park)** – signing of a grant award contract is pending.

#### **IV. BENEFICIARIES**

Eligible beneficiaries under Priority Axis 3 include a wide range of entities – municipal authorities, associations of municipalities, directorates within the Ministry of Environment and Water and within the Executive Forest Agency (EFA) that are responsible for managing national and natural parks respectively, as well as other structural units within these two institutions that are involved in/responsible for the management of NATURA 2000 sites and protected areas, NATURA 2000 management administrations, non-governmental organizations.

As regards the direct award procedures under OPE Priority Axis 3:

Specific beneficiary of the grant for activities for the management of NATURA 2000 network (including area and zone mapping, building of a protected areas information system) and for activities for development of national strategic documents (including national information and communication strategy to raise the awareness of municipalities and of the public on NATURA 2000, conducting analyses and surveys) is the National Nature Protection Service (NNPS) Directorate within MOEW on account of its functions related to the construction and maintenance of the national ecological network as laid down in the Structural Regulations of MOEW and the Biological Diversity Act (BDA). Exception in terms of mapping is made only for the mapping of special protection areas for birds that do not overlap with special protection areas for habitats. In these cases different approach is taken - mapping within the zone. Therefore, it is more appropriate for the mapping and development of management plans to be carried out simultaneously by the respective contractor.

In connection with its functions to monitor all components of the environment, incl. Biodiversity, under the Structural Rules of the Agency the Executive Environment Agency (EEA) is a specific beneficiary for activities related to field studies of species distribution / evaluation of the status of species and habitats throughout the country.

In view of the commitments of national and nature park directorates to the management plans for the respective parks, these directorates are specific beneficiary for their development. Considering the functions of the Regional Inspectorates of Environment and Water (RIEW) under PAA, these inspectorates are designated specific beneficiary for the development of the management plans for nature reserves.

In the absence of a regulatory basis explicitly establishing a specific beneficiary for a given activity and where the legislative framework so permits, eligible are all potential beneficiaries under OPE Priority Axis 3, i.e. municipalities, NGOs, structures within MOEW (RIEW, EEA, national park directorates, NNPS Directorate) and EFA (nature park directorates). In such cases, procedures for competition-based selection are to be announced. These include the general procedures for preservation and restoration of biodiversity, development of the

management plans for the protected areas under NATURA 2000, raising the awareness on NATURA 2000 network, development and implementation of action plans for species, reducing the negative impact of invasive species.

#### **V. TYPES OF PROJECTS ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING FROM OPE**

The following groups of activities would be funded under Priority Axis 3 within the operations eligible for funding under OPE and in accordance with the measures set out in the national environmental legislation:

CATEGORIZATION	GROUPS OF PROCEDURES	PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE PROCEDURES	PERIOD OF ANNOUNCEMENT	INDICATORS	POTENTIAL BENEFICIARIES
1. MANAGEMENT PLANNING	Development/update of management plans	<b>Development and update of management plans for nature reserves</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ research</li> <li>➤ inventory taking</li> <li>➤ analysis of available information</li> <li>➤ mapping<sup>1</sup></li> <li>➤ evaluation of the status of environmental components</li> <li>➤ development of conservation and/ or recovery measures</li> <li>➤ elaboration/update of a draft management plan and annexes thereto</li> <li>➤ organization of public discussions on the development/update of the management plan for the managed reserve (consultations and organization of necessary meetings)</li> </ul>	2011-2013 – following an analysis and prioritization	Approved management plan	Respective RIEWs

<sup>1</sup> Mapping for the development of management plans do not overlap with the mapping of species and habitats for the purpose of developing management plans for protected areas.

		<p><b>Update of management plans for national parks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ research</li> <li>➤ inventory taking</li> <li>➤ analysis of available information</li> <li>➤ mapping<sup>2</sup></li> <li>➤ evaluation of the status of environmental components</li> <li>➤ development of conservation and/ or recovery measures</li> <li>➤ update of a draft management plan and annexes thereto</li> <li>➤ organization of public discussions on the development/update of the management plan for the national part (consultations and organization of necessary meetings)</li> </ul>	<p>2009 – announced procedure for update of the management plans for Rila National Park and Central Balkan National Park</p> <p>2011 – procedure for update of the management plan for Pirin National Park</p>	<p>Approved management plan</p>	<p>National park directorates</p>
		<p><b>Development and update of management plans for natural parks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ research</li> <li>➤ inventory taking</li> <li>➤ analysis of available information</li> <li>➤ mapping<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>	<p>2009 – announced procedure for development of management plans for Belasitsa and Balgarka Nature Parks, 2011-2013 (where applicable)</p>	<p>Approved management plan</p>	<p>Nature park directorates</p>

<sup>2</sup> Mapping for the development of management plans do not overlap with the mapping of species and habitats under NATURA 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Mapping for the development of management plans do not overlap with the mapping of species and habitats under NATURA 2000.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ evaluation of the status of environmental components</li> <li>➤ development of conservation and/ or recovery measures</li> <li>➤ development/update of a draft management plan and annexes thereto</li> <li>➤ organization of public discussions on the development/update of the management plan for the nature park (consultations and organization of necessary meetings)</li> </ul>			
		<p><b>Development of management plans for protected sites outside national and nature parks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ research</li> <li>➤ inventory taking</li> <li>➤ analysis of available information</li> <li>➤ mapping<sup>4</sup></li> <li>➤ evaluation of the status of environmental components</li> <li>➤ development of conservation and/ or recovery measures</li> <li>➤ development of a draft</li> </ul>	2011-2013 – following further analysis of the need to develop management plans for such territories	Approved management plan	All eligible Beneficiaries of OPE

<sup>4</sup> Mapping for the development of management plans do not overlap with the mapping of species and habitats under NATURA 2000.

		management plan and annexes thereto			
		<p><b>Development of management plans for special protection areas for birds that do not overlap with special protection areas for habitats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ research</li> <li>➤ inventory taking</li> <li>➤ analysis of available information</li> <li>➤ mapping of birds under Directive 2009/147/EC;</li> <li>➤ establishing the conservation status of birds under Directive 2009/147/EC;</li> <li>➤ development of conservation and/ or recovery measures</li> <li>➤ Development of a draft management plan and annexes thereto</li> </ul>	June 2010 2011-2013	➤ Approved management plans for special protection areas for birds that <b>do not overlap</b> with special protection areas for habitats	All eligible Beneficiaries of OPE
		<p><b>Development of management plans for protected areas for conservation of habitats and development of integrated plans (for overlapping birds and habitats areas)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Development of a draft management plan with annexes thereto</li> </ul>	2011-2013 – upon receipt of the results from the mapping of habitats and species for the areas concerned	Approved management plans for protected areas for conservation of habitats and approved integrated plans (for <b>overlapping</b> birds and habitats areas)	All eligible beneficiaries of OPE

	Action plans	<b>Development of action plans for species pursuant to Art. 52 and Art. 53 of BDA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ research</li> <li>➤ inventory taking</li> <li>➤ analysis of available information</li> <li>➤ mapping<sup>5</sup></li> <li>➤ evaluation of the status of environmental components</li> <li>➤ development of conservation and/ or recovery measures</li> <li>➤ elaboration/update of a draft management plan and annexes thereto</li> </ul>	December 2010 2011-2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of developed action plans for species;</li> <li>➤ Number of protected species covered by action plans</li> </ul>	All eligible beneficiaries of OPE
	Development and implementation of information products	<b>Development and implementation of the information system for the protected areas of the environmental network NATURA 2000</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Development or update and implementation of an integrated database to establish the cumulative effect of implemented investment proposals;</li> </ul>	2009 – announced procedure for development of NATURA 2000 network and approved project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Developed integrated database on NATURA 2000;</li> <li>➤ Development of a database to establish the cumulative effect of implemented investment proposals, plans, programmes and projects in the protected areas;</li> </ul>	NNPS Directorate within MOEW

<sup>5</sup> Mapping for the development of management plans do not overlap with the mapping of species and habitats for the purpose of developing management plans for protected areas.

<p><b>2.FIELD STUDIES</b></p>	<p>Mapping activities</p>	<p><b>Mapping of protected areas of NATURA 2000 (Phase I)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mapping of habitats and species covered by Directive 2009/147/EC and Directive 92/43/EEC;</li> <li>➤ establishment of the conservation status of habitats and species Directive 2009/147/EC and Directive 92/43/EEC;</li> <li>➤ Study of the national distribution of habitats and species included in Annex 2 to BDA, which have not been sufficiently studied to date, with a view to collecting information necessary for the reporting under Art. 17;</li> <li>➤ Study of the compliance of certain habitats and species in the Republic of Bulgaria with EC requirements;</li> <li>➤ Development and approval of methodologies to establish favourable conservation status of habitats and species.</li> </ul>	<p>2009 – announced procedure for development of NATURA 2000 network and approved project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of mapped protected areas of NATURA 2000 network;</li> <li>➤ % of mapped protected areas;</li> <li>➤ Number (and type) of mapped species and habitats;</li> <li>➤ Number of developed and approved methodologies for establishment of favourable conservation status of habitats and species</li> </ul>	<p>NNPS Directorate within MOEW</p>
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		<b>Mapping of protected areas of NATURA 2000 (Phase II)</b>	2011 - 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of mapped protected areas of NATURA 2000 network;</li> <li>➤ % of mapped protected areas;</li> <li>➤ Number (and type) of mapped species and habitats;</li> <li>➤ Number of developed and approved methodologies for establishment of favourable conservation status of habitats and species</li> </ul>	NNPS Directorate within MOEW
	Field studies	<b>Field studies of distribution/evaluation of the status of species and habitats across national territory</b>	October 2010 2011 - 2013 (on a regular basis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of species and habitats with evaluated status.</li> </ul>	EEA, national park directorates (NPD), nature Park directorates (Nature PD), Executive Forest Agency (EFA)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Study of species and habitats included in Annex 3 to BDA or in the National Biodiversity Monitoring System (NBDMS) (except for the species and habitats included in annexes 1 and 2 to BDA);</li> <li>➤ Outside protected areas: study of species and habitats included in the approved lists to the National Biodiversity Monitoring System (NBDMS).</li> </ul>			

<b>3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCIENTIFIC BASE FOR PROTECTION OF BIODIVERSITY</b>					
	Strategic documents and studies	<b>Development of strategic and programming documents for preservation, halting the loss of and restoration of biodiversity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Studies and analyses required to identify national strategies and programmes;</li> <li>➤ Study of the impact of invasive species and recommendation to curb their negative impact;</li> <li>➤ Study of the impact of climate conditions on biodiversity.</li> </ul>	October 2010 2011 - 2013 (on a regular basis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of developed documents</li> </ul>	NNPS Directorate within MOEW
		<b>Research and development of documentation related to the forthcoming announcement of protected areas for marine habitats.</b>	2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Developed documentation in connection with the forthcoming announcement of protected areas for marine habitats</li> </ul>	NNPS Directorate within MOEW

<p><b>4. RESTORATION AND MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING INFRASTRUCTURE ACTIVITIES</b></p>	<p>Restoration and management activities</p>	<p><b>Activities required for the management of protected areas, for achieving favourable conservation status of habitats and species included and not included in the management plans, and related to the sustainable use of resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Activities for preservation and management and, where necessary, restoration of habitats and/or populations of species, and, where necessary, biological and environmental studies directly related to the management of the population of the species. In order for the study activities to be eligible, the application form must contain detailed rationale of the need thereof, specifying other studies on the same or similar subject and explaining how the project will add up to scientific knowledge;</li> <li>➤ Activities aiming to curb the negative impact of invasive species;</li> </ul>	<p>2008 – announced procedure for preservation and restoration of biodiversity and 23 projects under implementation June 2010</p> <p>2011 - 2013 (on a regular basis)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number by type of implemented restoration and management measures;</li> <li>➤ Number of management plans for protected territories with activities under implementation;</li> <li>➤ Number of action plans with activities under implementation;</li> <li>➤ Number of restored populations of species and habitats;</li> <li>➤ Number of species for which preservation activities are implemented;</li> <li>➤ Number of habitats for which preservation activities are implemented;</li> <li>➤ Number of protected territories for which activities are implemented.</li> <li>➤ Change in the status of species and habitats</li> </ul>	<p>All eligible beneficiaries of OPE</p>
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	Investment activities	<p><b>Building of information centres, eco-trails, etc. for protected zones and protected areas included in management plans</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Activities for information provision / reconstruction and improvement of visitor facilities (eco-trails, marks, providing easy access for people with disabilities, construction / reconstruction /equipment of visitor information centers, etc.)<sup>6</sup></li> <li>➤ Construction of other facilities which contribute to the protection and maintenance and, where necessary, recovery of habitats and / or populations of species.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Within the procedures for competition-based selection for preservation and restoration:</b></p> <p>2008 – announced procedure for preservation and restoration of biodiversity and 23 projects under implementation December 2009</p> <p>June 2010</p> <p>2011 - 2013 (on a regular basis)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of restored populations;</li> <li>➤ Area of improved habitats.</li> </ul>	All eligible beneficiaries of OPE
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<sup>6</sup> In the absence of approved management plan for the protected area, the applicant must provide a detailed analysis of the necessity of implementing these activities. The analysis must include information on tourist flows and the potential for attendance of the infrastructure, demand analysis and justification of the scenario for the action, financial and institutional sustainability of the existing infrastructure (operation, maintenance and management after completion).

	Achieving favourable conservation status of habitats and species	<b>Support for the implementation of plans to curb the negative impact of invasive species, achievement of favourable conservation status of habitats and species outside protected territories</b>	September 2011 - 2013 r. 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of species for which the negative impact has been curbed;</li> <li>➤ Number of habitats and species for which the conservation status has been improved.</li> </ul>	All eligible beneficiaries of OPE
<b>5. PROMOTING OF NATURA 2000 AND RAISING PUBLIC SENSITIVITY TO PRESERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY</b>	Technical assistance	<b>Elaboration of national information and communication strategy to raise the awareness of municipalities and the public on NATURA 2000 network</b>	2009 – announced procedure for development of NATURA 2000 and approved project	➤ Developed integrated information and communication strategy for NATURA 2000 network.	NNPS Directorate within MOEW
	Implementation of the national information and communication strategy	<b>Raising the awareness of municipalities and the public on NATURA 2000 network in fulfilment of the national communication strategy, incl. putting in place conditions for organization of training and information events to promote biological diversity.</b>	2011-2013 – upon development and approval of the national information and communication strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of organized campaigns/events;</li> <li>➤ Number of published brochures;</li> <li>➤ Number of population outreached by campaigns / events.</li> </ul>	All eligible beneficiaries of OPE

## **VI. RATIONALE OF THE NEED TO ANNOUNCE PROCEDURES ACCORDING TO THE INDICATIVE SCHEDULE**

In accordance with the commitments to preserve biodiversity set out in the national legislation and considering the structures responsible for the implementation of these commitments, the following activities need to be implemented by the end of the programming period:

### **1. Management planning**

#### ***Development and update of management plans for nature reserves***

Nature reserves are ecosystems hosting rare and/or endangered wild plant and animal species and their habitats. The development of management plans for nature reserves will help to preserve their natural character, to conduct environmental monitoring, restore plant and animal species and their habitats as well as conserve the genetic resources (Art. 26 of PAA).

The requirement to draft management plans for the nature reserves stems from Art. 2 of the Ordinance on the development of management plans for protected areas. In the period 2011 – 2013, direct award procedures will be announced following an analysis of development/update needs.

#### ***Updating of national park management plans***

The management plans for national parks help to maintain the diversity of ecosystems and to preserve wildlife, to conserve and maintain the biodiversity within the ecosystems, to set up conditions for environmentally sound livelihood of the local community, etc. (Art. 18(2) of PAA).

The requirement to develop management plans for managed reserves stems from Art. 2 of the Ordinance on the development of management plans for protected areas.

In 2009, a procedure for update of the management plans for Rila National park and Central Balkan National Park was announced. Update of the management plan for Pirin National Park is scheduled for 2011.

#### ***Development and updating of nature parks management plans***

Nature parks are territories hosting diverse ecosystems with a variety of plant and animal species and habitats thereof, with typical and remarkable landscapes and objects of nonliving nature. The management plans help to maintain the diversity of ecosystems and to conserve the biodiversity therein; provide opportunities for the development of research, education and recreation activities; contribute to the sustainable use of renewable natural resources and to preserving the traditional forms of livelihood, provide conditions for tourism development.

The requirement to develop management plans for nature parks stems from Art. 2 of the Ordinance on the development of management plans for protected areas.

A procedure for development of management plans for Belasitsa Nature Park and Balgarka Nature Park was announced in 2009. At the time of announcement of these procedures, from the 11th natural parks (Biological Diversity Act), all except the above, have developed management plans or are under development and validation. In the period 2011 - 2013, will be announced procedures for other parks if their plans need update.

### ***Development of management plans for protected sites outside national and nature parks***

According to the Ordinance on the development of management plans for protected areas, management plans for protected sites are developed on a discretionary basis.

The development of management plans for protected sites **outside** national and nature parks is scheduled for completion in the period 2011 – 2013, following further analysis of the need of management plans for such areas.

### ***Development of management plans for special protection areas for birds that do not overlap with special protection areas for habitats***

According to Chapter Two, Section V “Management plans and development plans and projects” of the Biological Diversity Act and pursuant to the Ordinance on the terms and procedure for development and approval of management plans for protected areas, management plans may be elaborated for protected zones.

The development of management plans for special protection areas for birds that **do not** overlap with special protection areas for habitats is not linked to the current project “Mapping and establishment of the conservation status of natural habitats and species – Phase I”. Thus, a procedure for development of these plans is scheduled for June 2010 and later, in the period 2011 – 2013.

### ***Development of management plans for special protection areas for habitats and development of integrated plans (for overlapping special protection areas for birds and special protection areas for habitats)***

The development of management plans for special protection areas for habitats and the development of integrated plans (for **overlapping special protection areas for birds and special protection areas for habitats**) is linked to the outcomes of the “Mapping and establishment of the conservation status of natural habitats and species – Phase I” project and will be implemented on a periodic basis during the 2011-2013 period, upon receipt of the interim results of the mapping of habitats and species.

### ***Development of action plans for species pursuant to Art. 52 and Art. 53 of BDA***

According to Art. 52 of BDA, action plans for plant and animal species are to be developed where it has been established that:

- These are globally endangered species and their conservation requires preservation measures across the whole area of their natural habitation;
- The status of the species in the Republic of Bulgaria or in some national regions is not favorable;
- Alien species introduced in nature have a negative impact on the conditions of natural habitats or on the status of local wild flora and fauna species.

Priority is given to the development of action plans for plant and animal species included in the annexes to BDA (Art. 53 of BDA).

Announcement of procedures for development of action plans for species is scheduled for December 2010, as well as for the period 2011 – 2013.

### ***Development and implementation of an information system for the protected areas of NATURA 2000 environmental network***

According to the Ordinance on the terms and procedure for development and approval of management plans for protected areas, mapping material on a digital and a paper media, digital spatial data (GIS) containing information of all studies and analyses implemented within the protected area shall be enclosed to the plans.

The development and implementation of the information system for the protected areas of environmental network NATURA 2000 shall:

- Provide for an easy access to and updating of the data on:
  - Borders and location of protected areas as compared to the administrative division of the country and the territorial coverage of the structures within MOEW and the other institutions concerned with the management of the areas, the imposed administrative regimes and restrictions within the protected areas;
  - Location, territorial scope, characteristics of the plans, programmes, projects and investment proposals subject to assessment for compliance with the scope and objectives of the conservation of protected areas pursuant to the provisions of Art. 31 of the Biological Diversity Act, and on the conducted compliance assessment procedures;
  - Distribution and characteristics of the types of natural habitats and habitats of species subject to conservation in NATURA 2000 (annexes 1 and 2 to the Biological Diversity Act);
- Improving the coordination and control of the different administrative units involved in the management of protected areas and performing coordination, authorization and control functions in respect of the plans, project and investment proposals subject to compliance assessment;
- Ensuring transparency of administrative procedures and facilitated access to information for the public concerned.

A direct award procedure with NNPS as specific beneficiary has been announced and a project for implementation of the above activities has been approved. Contractor selection procedures under PPA have been announced within the project.

## **2. Field studies**

### ***Mapping of NATURA 2000 protected areas***

According to the Ordinance on the terms and procedure for development and approval of management plans for protected areas, the content of the plan shall include information on carried out mapping of habitats of species subject to conservation and mapping of natural habitats subject to conservation. Mapping material on a digital and a paper carrier, digital spatial data (GIS) containing information on all studies and analyses carried out within the protected area shall be enclosed to the plans.

The project “Mapping and establishment of the conservation status of natural habitats and species – Phase I” was approved in 2009. The project will contribute for:

- Establishing the conservation status of natural habitats and species under Directive 92/43/EEC and identifying the risk areas for the wild birds covered by Directive 2009/147/EC in the construction of wind generators.

- Fulfillment of the commitments of the Republic of Bulgaria concerning the implementation of Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora and Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds, achieving thereby environmentally sound economic development.
- Addressing some major problems identified in the National Plan, such as man-caused degradation, fragmentation and loss of habitats; underefficient implementation of nature conservation legislation; problems in the implementation of preventive instruments, towards preservation of biodiversity.

### ***Initial study of distribution and evaluation of the status of species and habitats***

The study of species and habitats is a necessary prerequisite for the operation of the National Biodiversity Monitoring System (NBDMS) pursuant to BDA and the Ordinance on the terms and procedure for the set up and operation of the National Biodiversity Monitoring System.

The announcement of a procedure for conducting field studies on the distribution of species and assessment of the status of species and habitats across national territory is scheduled for **October 2010 and, if only necessary, for the period 2011 – 2013**. The study of protected areas will cover species and habitats included in Annex 3 to BDA or in NBDMS (except for the species and habitats included in annexes 1 and 2 to BDA). Species and habitats outside protected areas will be studied on basis of approved lists attached to NBDMS. The studies will be conducted on basis of approved monitoring arrangements<sup>7</sup>.

### **3. Development of the scientific basis for preservation of biodiversity**

***Studies and analyses needed to identify national strategies and programmes; development of strategic and programming documents for preservation, halting the loss and restoration of biodiversity, including: update of the National Biodiversity Plan, study of the impact of invasive species and recommendations on curbing their negative influence, study of the impact of climate change on biodiversity, etc.***

Announcement of the first procedure for development of studies and analyses necessary to identify national strategies and programmes and for development of strategic and programming documents for preservation, halting the loss and restoration of biodiversity is scheduled for October 2010.

Such procedures will be announced on a regular basis in the period 2011-2013.

### **Research and development of documentation related to the forthcoming announcement of protected areas for marine habitats.**

The necessity of that activity is related to the upcoming announcement of protected marine habitat areas at EU level.

### **4. Restoration and management activities, including infrastructure activities**

***Implementation of activities aiming to preserve and restore biodiversity (activities necessary to manage protected areas, to achieve favourable conservation status of habitats and species***

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<sup>7</sup> The activities will not overlap with the activities of the mapping of habitats and species in Natura 2000.

***within and outside the scope of the management plans and activities for sustainable use of resources):***

Activities to preserve, maintain and, where necessary, restore habitats and/or population of species of European significance, including construction of facilities contributing thereto, and, where applicable, biological and environmental studies with direct bearing on the management of the species populations. In order for the study-organizing activities to be eligible, the application forms must contain detailed rationale of the need thereof, stating also other studies on the same or similar subject and explaining how the project will add up to scientific knowledge;

Activities to curb the negative impact of invasive species;

Activities for information support/reconstruction and improvement of the visitor infrastructure (eco-trails, marking, providing facilitated access for people with disabilities, construction/reconstruction/equipment of visitor information centres, etc.). In order for the activity to be eligible, the applicant must submit a detailed analysis of the need to implement these activities. The analysis must contain information on the tourist flow, the visitability potential of the infrastructure concerned, analysis of consumption and rationale of the variant chosen for implementation of the activity, financial and institutional sustainability (operation, maintenance and management after project completion), information on whether the infrastructure is envisaged in local or regional strategic or programming documents (including management plans for protected areas, municipal development programmes, etc.)

The implementation of activities to preserve and restore biodiversity helps to:

- Improve the favourable conservation status of habitats and species;
- Implement activities set out in the approved management plans for the protected areas;
- Implement activities set out in approved action plans for species;
- Improve the conditions for sustainable use of the resources in protected areas;
- Curb the negative factors impacting habitats and species;

Upon completion of the assessment of the first implemented competition-based procedure for preservation and restoration of biodiversity, MA of OPE conducted an in-house analysis of documents (guidelines for applicants and annexes thereto) with a view to improve them for the future announcement of such procedures. The analysis identified a need to envisage within the preparation of the next procedure for selection of preservation and restoration of biodiversity projects a mechanism to establish the need of construction of information centres and to limit the scope of investment in such infrastructure (e.g. to give priority to the financing of activities for construction of information centres only where that is explicitly provided for in an approved management plan for a protected area, and in respect of other such activities to request information from the applicant on the existing visitor infrastructure, as well as information on the tourist flow in the region, and set a ceiling on the budget for this activity).

The two competitive selection procedures for preservation and restoration of biodiversity, set out in the 2009 Indicative Annual Work Programme (IAWP) and in 2010 IAWP, have been integrated into one procedure, which is to be announced in June 2010. The integrated procedure takes into account the recommendations in the above analysis.

In the period 2011 – 2013, procedures for the implementation of activities for preservation and restoration of biodiversity will be announced on an annual basis.

***Support for the implementation of activities set out in approved action plans for species; implementation of activities to curb the negative impact of invasive species; implementation of activities to achieve favourable conservation status of habitats and species outside protected areas:***

The implementation of activities set out in approved action plans for species, activities to curb the negative influence of invasive species and activities to achieve favourable conservation status of habitats and species outside protected areas has been laid down in the 2010 IAWP (September).

## **5. Promoting NATURA 2000 and enhancing public awareness about the preservation of biodiversity**

***Preparing a national information and communication strategy to raise the awareness of municipalities and of the public on NATURA 2000 network***

There is a need to prepare a national information and communication strategy to raise the awareness of municipalities and of the public on NATURA 2000 network, with the view of:

- Generating wide public support and commitment and promoting the objectives of NATURA 2000 network.
- Preparing the general public and the stakeholders for the elaboration of a consensus-based approach to the management of protected areas.
- Contributing to attainment of the objectives of the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive.

A direct award procedure with NNPS as specific beneficiary has been announced and a project for implementation of the above activities has been approved. A contractor selection procedure under PPA has been announced within the project.

***Raising the awareness of municipalities and the public on NATURA 2000 network (e.g. organizing and conducting information campaigns, preparing the necessary information materials (guides, brochures, maps), seminars, symposia, information materials on trainings, capacity enhancing activities, conducting studies of the level of awareness on the topics concerned):***

Raising the awareness of municipalities and the public on NATURA 2000 is linked to the development of the national information and communication strategy; therefore, implementation of any NATURA 2000-related activities is scheduled for the period 2011-2013.

Strategy implementation activities are scheduled for the period 2011-2013, following elaboration and approval of the national information and communication strategy.

## VII. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

Financial Plan (EU + national public funds) for OPE by categories of activities in the period 2007-2013, in leva, are as follows:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Funding from the European Regional Development Fund</b>	<b>National public funding</b>	<b>Total funds</b>	<b>Announced/ concluded treaties/ orders for Grant aid in the OPE to June 1, 2010</b>
<b>I. Management planning</b>	34 349 006.51	6 061 589.39	40 410 595.90	12 452 338.79
<b>II. Field studies</b>	34 349 006.51	6 061 589.39	40 410 595.90	25 863 637.60
<b>III. Scientific base</b>	8 587 251.63	1 515 397.35	10 102 648.98	0
<b>IV. Restoration and maintenance activities, including infrastructure activities</b>	85 872 516.29	15 153 973.46	101 026 489.75	18 095 521.39
<b>V. Promoting of NATURA 2000 and raising public sensitivity to preservation of biodiversity</b>	8 587 251.63	1 515 397.35	10 102 648.98	173 070.00
<b>Total of Priority axis 3 "Preservation and restoration of biodiversity"</b>	<b>171 745 032.57</b>	<b>30 307 946.94</b>	<b>202 052 979.51</b>	<b>57 445 859.39</b>

Infrastructure measures are to be implemented within the categories IV "Restoration and maintenance activities, incl. Infrastructure", and category V "Promoting of NATURA 2000 and raising public sensitivity to preservation of biodiversity".

Following approach would be taken while announcing the forthcoming procedures:

If visitor infrastructure would be constructed outside or within the protected area, but this is not included in the adopted / approved management plan, the applicant must provide a detailed analysis of the need to implement these activities. The analysis must include information on tourist flows and the potential for attendance of the infrastructure, demand analysis and justification of the scenario for the action, financial and institutional sustainability of the existing infrastructure (operation, maintenance and management after completion). It will be placed also specific restrictions to a certain amount of money for building information centers within the individual projects.

## VIII. PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following evaluation criteria will be applied to submitted project proposals depending on the type of announced procedures. The criteria given below are aimed at selecting, following the formal evaluation of administrative compliance, projects that are most conducive of attainment of operational programme's objectives, while contributing also to the implementation of the national policy for preservation of biodiversity and for the maintenance and management of the national environmental network.

### For competition-based selection procedures

#### I. Evaluation for administrative compliance

No.	Criteria	Yes/No
I.1	The application form and the accompanying documents was submitted within the specified deadline;	
I.2	The application form has the official form specified (on paper and on electronic media);	
I.3	All requisite fields of the application form (Annex 1 to the Guidelines for Applicants) have been completed;	
I.4	The application form is in Bulgarian;	
I.5	The information required is typed except for applicant's signature and seal;	
I.6	Where the applicant is an association, required documents according to the Guidelines for Applicants, are enclosed;	
I.7	All documents required according to the Guidelines to Applicants are enclosed, including information and publicity measures.	

#### II. Evaluation for eligibility

No.	Criteria	Yes/No/Not applicable
II.1	The applicant is registered in the Republic of Bulgaria;	
II.2	The applicant is an eligible beneficiary of the operational programme. Where the applicant is an association, both the lead partner and the other partners are eligible beneficiaries of the operational programme;	
II.3	The project activities will be implemented only on the national territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, the continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone;	
II.4	The applicant does not fall under any of the categories specified in Art. 93(1), Art. 94 and Art. 96, indent (a) of Regulation 1605/2002/EC, Euratom, applicable to the general budget of the European Communities;	
II.5	Reimbursable project expenditures are not to be funded under another project, programme or scheme financed with public funds from the national budget and/or the budget of the European Communities;	
II.6	Requested funding is within the amounts as specified in the Guidelines for Applicants;	
II.7	Planned activities are eligible according to the Guidelines for Applicants;	

II.8	Planned project activities conform to the objective specified in the Guidelines for Applicants	
II.9	Requested assistance shall be used to fund only eligible expenditure under the Guidelines for Applicants;	
II.10	The applicant has submitted proof of procured own contribution to finance ineligible expenditure;	
II.11	The applicant has procured adequate funds to make payments under the project prior to reimbursement;	
II.12	The project duration is within the limits as specified in the Guidelines for Applicants;	

### III. Technical and financial evaluation

<b>Compliance</b>		
<b>Criteria</b>		<b>Points</b>
III.1.	The project proposal contributes to implementation of the commitments undertaken by the Republic of Bulgaria;	
III.2.	The project proposal contributes to the realization of EU horizontal principles specified in the application form;	
III.3.	A clear and accurate justification of the need to implement the project has been provided	
<b>Methodology and work plan</b>		
<b>Criteria</b>		<b>Points</b>
IV.1.	Proposed activities contribute to attainment of project objectives;	
IV.2.	Planned activities have been secured in terms of implementation (PPA, in-house experts);	
IV.3.	The timetable is realistic and feasible within the time limits specified by the applicant;	
IV.4.	The project provides for a system of monitoring and evaluation of implemented activities;	
IV.5.	Project-inherent difficulties and risks have been described and preventive measures to address them have been proposed;	
<b>Applicant's experience</b>		
<b>Criterion</b>		<b>Points</b>
V.1.	Technical capacity of applicant;	
V.2.	The applicant has proven experience in the management and/or implementation of similar projects;	
V.3.	Financial stability of applicant;	
<b>Project implementation team</b>		
<b>Criterion</b>		<b>Points</b>
VI.1.	The contractor/expert team/field assistant selection procedure is in line with project activities	
<b>Sustainability (where applicable)</b>		
<b>Criterion</b>		<b>Points</b>
VII.1.	Multiplication effect and financial sustainability	
VII.2.	Stakeholders and their interest	
<b>Financial evaluation of the project</b>		
<b>Criterion</b>		<b>Points</b>
VIII.1.	Financial evaluation of the project	

<b>TOTAL</b>	
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### Direct award procedures

No.	Criterion	Yes/No/Not applicable
1.	The application form has been completed and submitted in the specified form and has been duly signed and stamped	
2.	The applicant has completed and submitted all required documents as per the samples attached to the application form and pursuant to the requirements to their preparation specified in the invitation to apply	
3.	All documents specified in applicant's list of documents included in the project proposal have been submitted	
4.	The project proposal has been submitted by the beneficiary to whom the invitation to apply has been addressed	
5.	Project activities will be implemented only on the national territory of the Republic of Bulgaria, the continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone;	
6.	The scope of the project conforms to what has been specified in the invitation to apply	
7.	Requested funding is within the amounts specified in the invitation to apply	
8.	The project duration is within the time limits specified in the invitation to apply	
9.	Reimbursable project expenditure are not funded by another project, programme or scheme financed with public funds from the national budget and/or the budget of the European Communities	
10.	The applicant has secured adequate funds for the project expenditure that are not covered by the operational programme, including own contribution where such is required	
11.	The applicant has secured adequate funds to make payments related to project implementation before reimbursement	
12.	The project contributes to the fulfilment of commitments undertaken by the Republic of Bulgaria and to attainment of OPE Priority Axis 3 objectives	
13.	A clear and accurate justification of the need to implement the project has been provided	
14.	The project conforms to the requirements of applicable legislation	
15.	The activities contribute to attainment of the objectives specified in the invitation to apply	
16.	The organizational structure for project implementation ensures division of the monitoring and control from the project implementation	
17.	The timetable of activities is realistic and feasible within the time limits specified by the applicant	
18.	The project provides for a system of monitoring and control of implemented activities	
19.	Project-inherent difficulties and risks have been described and preventive measures to address them have been proposed	
20.	Financial evaluation of the project	

