



**“ROAD MAP” FOR  
REVISION OF THE  
BULGARIAN  
BIOSPHERE RESERVES  
DESIGNATED UNDER  
UNESCO’S MAN AND  
THE BIOSPHERE  
PROGRAMME**

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## **“ROAD MAP” FOR REVISION OF THE BULGARIAN BIOSPHERE RESERVES DESIGNATED UNDER UNESCO’S MAN AND THE BIOSPHERE PROGRAMME**

### ***CURRENT STATE***

Bulgaria has 16 Biosphere reserves (BR) all designated in 1977 – Alibotush, Bayuvi Dupki - Dzhindzhiritsa, Bistrishko Branishte, Boatin, Chervenata stena, Chuprene, Dzhendema, Dupkata, Kamchia, Kupena, Mantaritsa, Uzunbudzhak, Parangalitsa, Srebarna, Steneto, Tsarichina. They were selected to represent typical ecosystems with relatively untouched biotic and abiotic components and are more or less evenly distributed throughout the country.

All BRs belong to the first generation of Biosphere Reserves, designated long before the adoption of the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework, and thus, they were established only with core zones. So, only the conservation and partly the logistic support functions, related to research and biodiversity monitoring have been taking place.

None of the 16 Bulgarian BRs corresponds to the zoning and functional requirements of the Seville Strategy and Statutory framework, adopted in 1995.

Fifteen BRs are strict reserves and one (Srebarna) is a managed reserve according to the Bulgarian legislation. These categories are very strict and do not allow any human activities related to sustainable usage of natural resources.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria (Article 18) and the Protected Areas Act - PAA (Article 8, paragraph 1), the strict and managed reserves are exclusive state property and are managed by the respective governmental institutions and their branches, i.e. the Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW) and the Regional Inspectorates of Environment and Water (RIEW).

According to PAA as strict nature and managed reserves are declared examples of natural ecosystems, hosting typical and/or remarkable wild plant and animal species and habitats.

According to the legislation, in strict nature reserves is allowed only their guarding, conducting of scientific research and passing of visitors along marked trails determined with an order of the Minister of environment and water. For the managed reserves are allowed also maintaining, steering, controlling or restorative measures, aimed at conservation of the particular habitats and species which are subject of protection.

Since the 16 BRs are exclusively state property their management is provided by the Ministry of environment and water (MOEW) on national level and by the competent Regional Inspectorates of Environment and Water (RIEW) and the 3 National Park Directorates which are regional authorities of the MOEW applying the state policy at regional and local level.

For these reasons during the years the MAB Secretariat of UNESCO has invited Bulgaria to fulfill its obligations and make the sites correspond to the Seville Strategy requirements or withdraw these that do not have the potential to meet the current criteria. The deadline for submission of nominations for the revised sites is end of September 2016.

### ***MEASURES AND MAJOR STEPS FOR REVISION OF THE BULGARIAN BIOSPHERE RESERVES***

In response to the requests by the MAB Secretariat to revise and update the Bulgarian Biosphere Reserves in the past few years (2013–2016) several major achievements have been made:

1. Establishment in 2013 and functioning of a national Expert Group to deal with the revision of the Bulgarian BRs
2. Enlargement of the National MAB Committee as to include all major key stakeholders (until 2015 the MAB Committee involved only members from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and of the Ministry of Environment and Water); currently the MAB Committee involves ca. 17 experts representing the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia University, 5 Ministries, 2 NGOs, the National UNESCO Commission, and selected BRs
3. Planning of funding resources for revision of the Bulgarian network of Biosphere Reserves in the Operational Program 'Environment' (2014–2020)
4. Conducting of periodic reviews for all BRs and submission in early 2015 of the periodic review forms to the MAB Secretariat

The Periodic reviews of the Bulgarian Biosphere reserves were done in cooperation between the MOEW, experts from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (including the Chairperson and Secretary of the National MAB Committee), the competent RIEW and the 3 National Park Directorates.

The Periodic reviews were considered by the International Advisory Committee for Biosphere Reserves (IACBR) which met at UNESCO Headquarters in January 2016. The IACBR gave recommendations to the State Party for undertaking the necessary steps in order to comply to the requirements of the MAB Program.

The International Advisory Committee (25-28.01.2016) noted that all the Bulgarian biosphere reserves have been designated before the adoption of the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework. Their zonation is not meeting the statutory framework criteria as only the conservation function and partly the logistic function have been implemented. The Advisory Committee acknowledged that in response to the MAB Council adoption of the Exit Strategy, a national Expert Group was established in 2013 and that also the MAB National Committee was enlarged to include all major stakeholders. It also welcomed the mentioned plan to fund review of the Bulgarian network of biosphere reserves within the Operational Program 'Environment' (2014–2020). The Advisory Committee also acknowledged the unique contribution of the sites to conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems as well as contribution to scientific research.

The International Advisory Committee noted that all Bulgarian biosphere reserves share the same borders with specific nature conservation areas, under the national legislation. As the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and the specific Bulgarian legislation - Protected Areas Act, allow no human settlements within their boundaries, the biosphere reserves in Bulgaria are with no inhabitants.

The International Advisory Committee recommended that drastic changes need to be made on the spatial structure of the biosphere reserves to include inhabited areas, to consider new zonation scheme, for building a shared common vision with diverse stakeholders and relevant management structures and management plans for the sites that will equally reflect all the three functions of a biosphere reserve.

The International Advisory Committee recommended that the authorities consider the withdrawal of all but one biosphere reserves and strongly encouraged the authorities to submit new proposals based on the implementation of the Statutory Framework

criteria, the involvement and active participation of stakeholders, including local communities in the nomination process.

**The International Advisory Committee of the Biosphere Reserves “strongly encouraged” the submission of new nominations in accordance with the Seville Strategy and the Statutory Framework. Several biosphere reserves (i.e. Uzunbudzhak, Chervenata stena, Srebarna, etc.) were recommended as territories, having high potential to meet the criteria.**

5. Conducting of project “Revision of the Network of Biosphere Reserves in Bulgaria”

In order to meet the requirements of UNESCO and to keep at least few of the Bulgarian old generation biosphere reserves, the MOEW has supported (including financially) a project for “Revision of the Network of Biosphere Reserves in Bulgaria”. The project has been carried out in the period 2015–2016 in cooperation between the Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation (an NGO with strong interest in the field of biosphere reserves) and MOEW. Preliminary assessments in eight regions have been conducted within the project. The regions were selected on the basis of a set of criteria.

The following eight areas with already existing biosphere reserves of the old generation were assessed: Strandzha Nature Park (Uzunbudzhak Reserve), Central Balkan National Park (Boatin, Dzhendema, Steneto and Tsarichina BRs), Western Balkans (Chuprene BR), Western Rodopi mountain (Kupena, Dupkata, Mantaritsa BRs) and Rodopi – Dobrostan region (Chervenata stena BR), Srebarna lake (Srebarna BR), Kamchia river (Kamchia BR) which are biosphere reserves from the first generation. Additionally, the area of Belasitsa Nature Park was explored as a possible new nomination.

The assessment had to identify the readiness of the local communities and governments to support the nomination of the region as a modern biosphere reserve.

Three regions with the highest potential to meet the modern requirements of biosphere reserves were chosen on the basis of the assessments. The results were presented and approved at a meeting of the MAB National Committee held on 24.03.2016. It was decided that nomination forms for three modern BRs will be elaborated and submitted to the MAB Secretariat by the end of September 2016 – Chervenata stena BR, Srebarna BR and Central Balkan BR (including 4 first generation BRs – Steneto, Dzhendema, Tsarichina and Boatin).

6. Informing the local authorities about the necessity for urgent revision of Bulgarian BRs

In the past three years (2014–2016) The Ministry of Environment and Water has sent several times letters to the local authorities from the municipalities and park directorates which harbour one of the current BRs in order to inform them about the urgent necessity for revision of the first-generation BRs. Also, the Ministry invited these authorities to undertake steps for such a revision.

In 2014 letters and additional information about the biosphere reserves was sent to 25 municipalities, 33 town-halls, 9 RIEW and 3 national park directorates. With these letters MOEW informed the local authorities about the major benefits of having a modern BR, the engagements the State have by participating in the MAB Programme, as well as invited them to hold meetings with the local communities and ensure

support for the revision of the current 16 BRs. Also, the Ministry offered support in preparing the zoning and the nomination files.

In 2015 MOEW sent reminding letters to 15 municipalities, 7 RIEW and 1 national park directorate from 8 regions which have higher potential to revise their BRs.

In 2015 MOEW sent letters to the Executive Forest Agency, to 6 Regional Forest Directorates and 4 State Forest Enterprises to invite them to support the revision of the current BRs within their competence.

In 2016, MOEW initiated a meeting with the Vice-Minister of Agriculture and Food and with the Director of the Executive Forest Agency in order to gain support for inclusion of forest territories within the boundaries of possible post-Seville BRs.

In June 2016 MOEW sent again reminding letters to 24 municipalities, 9 RIEW and 3 national park directorates to invite them for action and inform them that the lack of action will result in delisting of the respective first-generation BR. As a result, 4 new municipalities expressed their willingness to establish a modern BR on their territory – Anton, Sevlievo, Pavel Banya (all around Central Balkan National Park), and Malko Tarnovo Municipality (within Strandzha Nature Park). On the other side, 7 municipalities clearly declared that they disagree to nominate their territories for a post-Seville BR: Tsarevo (Strandzha Nature Park), Batak (Dupkata BR), Chuprene (Chuprene BR), Avren and Dolni Chiflik (Kamchia BR), Peshtera and Bratsigovo municipalities (Kupena BR).

#### 7. Mission of the MAB Secretariat to Bulgaria, 10-12 May 2016

In March 2016 the MAB Secretariat proposed to MOEW to hold a consultative mission in Bulgaria in May 2016 in order to assist the State Party in its efforts to deal with the 16 old generation biosphere reserves. Numerous meetings and discussions with all key stakeholders (National MAB Committee, MOEW, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Executive Forest Agency, Executive Environmental Agency, municipalities, individual BRs, NGOs) for the Bulgarian BRs were held. The requirements and expectations of the MAB Secretariat were clearly stated. At the end, two important decisions were taken: 1) Nomination forms for at least two modern generation BRs to be prepared and submitted to the MAB Secretariat by the end of September 2016; 2) A “road map” to be developed with the major steps for revision of the Bulgarian network of BRs.

#### 8. Meeting of the National MAB Committee, 20 September 2016

At its meeting, the National MAB Committee decided:

- ✓ To submit to the MAB Secretariat nomination forms for establishment of four modern-generation BRs in Bulgaria – Central Balkan BR, Chervenata Stena BR, Srebarna BR and Uzunbudzhak BR – by the end of September 2016.
- ✓ To ask the Ministry of Environment and Water to send final letter to the municipalities near current BRs which have not taken decision yet inviting them to cooperate for the revision of the respective BR – Alibotush, Bayuvi dupki – Dzhindzhiritsa, Bistrishko Branishte, Chuprene, Mantaritsa and Parangalitsa. If no answer is received within a year or the answer is negative, then the National MAB Committee will recommend delisting of the site from the World network. If the answer is positive, then the MAB Committee will consider and support the revision of the site.

- ✓ To recommend to the MAB Secretariat to delist the following sites – Dupkata BR, Kupena BR and Kamchia BR – from the World network due to lack of support by the local communities. Attached to this file are the letters (in Bulgarian) of the local authorities with their decision not to support the revision of the respective BR.
9. Elaboration of a short-term (3-year) plan for support of the BRs in Bulgaria (following the decision of the Advisory Committee for BRs and ICC).

## ***POTENTIAL OF THE INDIVIDUAL BRs TO MEET THE CRITERIA AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE SEVILLE STRATEGY AND THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK***

### ***I. Biosphere reserves which are proposed as post-Seville BRs***

#### **I.1. BOATIN BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

##### **General information**

The reserve is situated on the northern slopes of the Central Stara Planina within the territory of the Central Balkan National Park. Boatin Reserve was originally designated on June 12, 1948 with an area of 1,597.2 hectares to protect the centuries-old beech forests. It is situated within the lands of village of Divchovoto, north of Tetevenska Baba Peak, and lies at altitudes between 800 and 1,750 m.

##### **Management**

Currently, Boatin BR is managed by the Central Balkan National Park Directorate.

##### **Potential**

In its current boundaries Boatin BR can not meet the Seville strategy requirements. There is a high potential for revision by considering the whole territory of Central Balkan National Park as well as the adjacent municipalities.

Central Balkan National Park (CBNP) covers an area of 72 021.07 ha and belongs to IUCN category II. It is located in the central part of Stara Planina mountain range, which runs from West to East from the Serbian border to the Black sea coast, parallel to Danube river.

The Central Balkan National Park was established as People's park in 1991 to conserve the unique natural scenery and heritage of this area and protect the customs and livelihood of the local population.

Central Balkan was designed as People's park around 9 strict nature reserves: Boatin, Tsarichina, Kozya Stena, Steneto, Severen Dzhendem, Peeshti Skali, Sokolna, Dzhendema and Stara Reka. The all contain representative examples of ecosystems that comprise unique, remarkable and/or characteristic plant or animal species in their natural habitat. All are areas of prime conservation significance – listed as Category 1 according to the World Conservation Union (IUCN) classification.

In 1999 Central Balkan People's park was reclassified into a national park, following the adoption of the Bulgarian Protected Areas act which introduced 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.

Central Balkan National Park is very suitable to form the core and buffer zones of a modern generation Biosphere reserve whereas the transition zone will be formed by the territory of the adjacent municipalities. Thus, the 9 reserves could become the core zone of a future biosphere

reserve; the rest of the national park's territory could be declared as a buffer zone and a transition zone could be established outside the Park, by using of the existing Natura 2000 sites but extending it to the whole territory of the concerned municipalities.

During the past few years the National MAB Committee in cooperation with the relevant governmental authorities, NGOs and local communities has undertaken steps towards revision of the Bulgarian biosphere reserves. A number of projects, aimed at this direction were completed, most of which supported by international programs and institutions, such as the Participatory Program of UNESCO, Regional office of UNESCO in Venice, the Swiss Development Agency and Monaco.

Central Balkan National Park was involved in almost all these projects since it was considered one of the most suitable territories for establishing of a post-Seville BR in Bulgaria. The activities held aimed at:

- Promoting the added value of the Biosphere reserves in several model regions of Bulgaria.
- Adapting and communicating the modern concept of the Biosphere reserves to the local stakeholders: municipalities, businesses, NGOs, business associations.
- Strengthening the local stakeholders' capacity to overcome the challenges of an operational Biosphere reserve
- Encouraging the know-how/best practice exchanges between different Biosphere reserves in Bulgaria and in Europe.

In November 2009 in Central Balkan National Park was held an international workshop for Man and Biosphere (MAB) Stakeholders in South East Europe, organized by the UNESCO Office in Venice – UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe (BRESCE), in co-operation with the Ministry of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Bulgarian MAB Committee, the Central Balkan National Park Directorate and the National Commission for UNESCO in Bulgaria. The overall goal of the workshop was to support the UNESCO Member States from SEE in making a more effective use of national Biosphere Reserves (BRs) – mostly in terms of promoting local quality economy initiatives and improving the institutional governance of the MAB Program. Representatives from 13 countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Kosovo Territory (in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244), Moldavia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia and Turkey) worked on the recent key MAB Program Strategic Document – the Madrid Action Plan and evaluated on how to make the best use of the BR model in their respective countries. Central Balkan National Park and some other Bulgarian BRs served as case studies to demonstrate how to better use the UNESCO designated areas. At the workshop were presented experiences from Central Balkan in the field of labeling of local products and development of eco-tourism and also from Strandzha mountain in the context of the proposed topic "quality economy".

Central Balkan National Park Directorate is the authority responsible for the management of Central Balkan National Park, including the nine reserves. It is a regional authority of the MOEW appointed for the management and control of the park. The Directorate was established in 1999 in line with Protected Areas Act.

If a post-Seville BR is established in the area, the Park Directorate can serve as a Secretariat and coordinator of the stake holder activities.

Since 2010 Central Balkan National Park Directorate has Public Advisory Council – a management model with the participation of all stakeholders. There are 26 members in the Council – representatives of the local municipalities, representatives of local businesses and producers of local products, users of the Park’s territory, local NGOs. The work of the Council is defined by specially designed regulations approved by the Minister of Environment and Water. The council meets at least once per year and takes decisions related to development of strategic documents and projects referring to the present and future development of the territory. There is also Scientific Advisory Council with 17 members.

In the past three years (2014 – 2016) the MOEW has several times invited the local authorities from the municipalities Karlovo, Troyan, Teteven, Aprilci, Sopot, Sevlievo, Anton, Pirdop and Pavel banja and offered support for revision of the four first-generation BRs (Boatin, Tsarichina, Steneto, Dzhendema) and establishment of a single modern-generation BR. Representatives of the above municipalities were also invited to participate at the mission with UNESCO experts in May 2016 in order to get to better know the Seville concept.

Central Balkan National Park and its 4 biosphere reserves (Boatin, Tsarichina, Steneto, Dzhendema) were part of the project for revision of the Bulgarian BRs carried out in 2015-2016 in cooperation between the Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation and MOEW.

The assessment made within the project showed the high potential of the area. Within the project several meetings and workshops with local municipalities and local communities were held aimed at raising their awareness about the benefits of a BR for the area.

The municipal councils of 5 out of 9 municipalities surrounding the National park took a formal decision and agreed to include their territories in a post-Seville BR. These are Karlovo, Troyan, Pavel banja, Sevlievo and Anton municipalities.

## **I.2. DZHENDEMA BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

### **General information**

Established in 1953 in order to protect the natural beech forests as well as the habitats and the population of the chamois. The area is one of the largest and most active plant speciation centers on silicious bedrock in the country. Dzhendema Reserve is located in the Central Balkan National Park and is the largest reserve in the park. The reserve lies between 580 and 1800 m above sea level.

According to the national legislation the area belongs to the category ‘reserve’ which has the strictest protection regime.

### **Management**

Currently, the reserve is managed by the Central Balkan National Park Directorate.

### **Potential**

This BR has high potential for revision by considering the territory of the whole Central Balkan National Park and the adjacent municipalities. For more details on the carried out activities and future perspectives, please, see the text under ‘Potential’ for ‘I.1. Boatin BR’.

### **I.3. STENETO BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

#### **General information**

Steneto Reserve is located in the Central Balkan National Park. It was established in 1963 in order to protect the natural beech and mixed beech-fir forests as well as the habitats of many rare animals. Declared as a BR in 1977. Its landscape is deeply dissected by river gorges flanked by steep crags. The reserve has numerous Karst features including precipices and caves. The underground river in the Kumanitsa flooded cave has an average flow rate of 600 liters per second. The reserve has centuries-old beech, spruce and mixed forests situated in the picturesque gorge of the Cherni Osum River.

According to the national legislation the area belongs to the category ‘reserve’ which has the strictest protection regime.

#### **Management**

Currently, the reserve is managed by the Central Balkan National Park Directorate.

#### **Potential**

This BR has high potential for revision by considering the territory of the whole Central Balkan National Park and the adjacent municipalities. For more details on the carried out activities and future perspectives, please, see the text under ‘Potential’ for ‘I.1. Boatin BR’.

### **I.4. TSARICHINA BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

#### **General information**

The reserve was established in 1949 to preserve its forest and subalpine ecosystems in their primary condition. It contains centuries-old spruce, fir and beech forests and natural ecosystems of Macedonian pine (*Pinus peuce*). The latter is a Balkan endemic and Tertiary relict and Tsarichina is its northernmost locality. Most of the reserve territory is forested.

The reserve is situated within Central Balkan National Park. According to the national legislation the area belongs to the category ‘reserve’ which has the strictest protection regime.

#### **Management**

Currently, the reserve is managed by the Central Balkan National Park Directorate.

#### **Potential**

This BR has high potential for revision by considering the territory of the whole Central Balkan National Park and the adjacent municipalities. For more details on the carried out activities and future perspectives, please, see the text under ‘Potential’ for ‘I.1. Boatin BR’.

### **I.5. CHERVENATA STENA BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

#### **General information**

Chervenata Stena was declared as a strict nature reserve with an area of 229.5 ha by Order No 2631/21.09.1962 by the General Directorate of Forestry. Since then it has been enlarged three times – by Order No 1555/21.10.1969 of the Ministry of Forests and Forest Industry, by Order No 176/09.03.1983 of the Committee for the Protection of Environment, and finally by Order No 1050/17.12.1990 of the Minister of Environment and Water. It was initially

established to protect the unique landscape and the flora and vegetation of the area, characterized by the presence of numerous rare, protected and endemic plant species.

The reserve is part of Dobrostan ridge which lies in the central part of the Rhodopi Mountains. It is situated on the territory of two municipalities – Asenovgrad Municipality, especially in the lands of Bachkovo, Dobrostan and Oreshets villages, and Laki Municipality, in the lands of Borovo village.

### **Management**

The reserve is managed by the Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water in the town of Plovdiv (RIEW – Plovdiv) under the MOEW.

### **Potential**

In the past three years (2014–2016) the MOEW has several times invited the authorities from the local municipalities – Asenovgrad and Laki to undertake steps for revision of Chervenata Stena BR and offered its support. Representatives of the above municipalities were also invited to participate at the mission with the UNESCO experts in May 2016 in order to get to better know the Seville concept.

Chervenata Stena BR was part of the project for revision of Bulgarian BRs carried out in 2015–2016. The assessment made within the project showed the high potential of the area. Within the project were held several meetings with local municipalities aimed at raising their awareness about the benefits of a BR to the area.

The municipal council of Asenovgrad took a decision for inclusion of the whole municipality in a post-Seville BR, whereas the municipal council of Laki municipality did not support joining to a post-Seville BR. Therefore, as buffer and transition area of the post-Seville BR will be declared only on the territory of Asenovgrad municipality.

In July 2016 the Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water – Plovdiv applied for funding to the Participation Programme of UNESCO (2016-2017) with a project aimed at achieving of compliance of Chervenata Stena BR with the requirements of the Seville Strategy and establishment of a sustainable development model of the site as a part of the UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves. The project was ranked at 1<sup>st</sup> position from the 7 national projects submitted to UNESCO.

The Objectives of the project are as follows:

- Giving publicity of the concept of BRs through a wide information campaign, aiming at highlighting of the significance of Chervenata Stena BR and the benefits for the local communities.
- Ensuring of a sustainable management of Chervenata Stena BR and preservation of the natural and cultural wealth.
- Exchange of experience with functioning foreign BRs, sharing of good practices for a sustainable management of the territory.

It is expected that as a result of the project Chervenata Stena BR will be set up as a functioning one in accordance with the Seville Strategy and the Statuary Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

## **I.6. SREBARNA BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

### **General information**

The reserve is situated in North-East Bulgaria along the Danube river at 10-13 m a.s.l. Core zone – 902.1 ha; buffer zone – 390.7 ha. Water surface – 120 ha. Established in 1948 for protection of the extraordinary rich bird-diversity. Since 1975 listed in the Ramsar Convention as wetland with international importance. Declared a biosphere reserve in 1977 and a World heritage site – in 1985.

According to the national legislation the area belongs to the category - “maintained reserve”.

The reserve is located on the territory of Silistra Municipality.

### **Management**

The Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water in the town of Ruse (RIEW – Ruse) under the MOEW is responsible for the management and guarding of the reserve.

### **Potential**

In the past three years (2014–2016) the MOEW has several times offered support and invited the authorities from the municipality of Silistra as well as the RIEW – Ruse to undertake steps for revision of Srebarna BR.

Representatives of the municipality and the RIEW – Ruse also participated at the mission with the UNESCO experts in May 2016 in order to get to better know the Seville concept.

Srebarna Biosphere reserve was part of the project for revision of Bulgarian BRs carried out in 2015-2016. The assessment made within the project showed the high potential of the area. The MAB National Committee agreed that the site will be nominated as a post-Seville BR.

Within the project several meetings with the municipality of Silistra and RIEW – Ruse were held aimed at raising their awareness about the benefits of a BR for the sustainable development of the area.

The municipal council of Silistra took a decision for inclusion of the whole municipality in a post-Seville biosphere reserve.

## **I.7. UZUNBUDZHAK BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

### **General information**

The reserve is situated in Strandzha Mountain within the boundaries of the Strandzha Nature Park. The core zone covers 2581.5 ha and the buffer zone – 488.1 ha. Lowest point – c. 25 m a.s.l.; highest point – 282 m a.s.l. Established in 1956 and declared a biosphere reserve in 1977.

According to the national legislation the area belongs to the strongest protection category - “reserve”, with very limited human activities.

The reserve is located on the territory of Malko Tarnovo municipality.

### **Management**

The Regional Inspectorate of environment and water in the town of Bourgas (RIEW – Bourgas) under the MOEW is responsible for the management and guarding of the reserve.

## Potential

In June 2009 started the implementation of the project "*Collaboration for biodiversity conservation and sustainable local development in Strandzha*", funded by the financial mechanism of the European Economic Area and implemented by the Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation (BBF) with project partners – the Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW), the Bulgarian National MAB Committee, Strandzha Nature Park Directorate and the Norwegian Ministry of Environment.

The project aimed at ensuring of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature in Strandzha, by increasing the public support for biodiversity conservation and implementation of effective models for the conservation, management and sustainable use of resources. One of the main goals of the project was to designate a post-Seville BR in the region.

In the past three years (2014–2016) the MOEW has several times offered support and invited the authorities from the municipalities of Malko Tarnovo and Tsarevo to undertake steps for establishment of a modern-generation BR in the region.

Uzunbodzhak BR was part of the project for revision of the Bulgarian BRs, carried out in 2015–2016. Within the project several meetings with the municipalities of Malko Tarnovo and Tsarevo town were held aimed at raising the awareness about the benefits of a BR for the sustainable development of the area. Some concerns expressed during the meetings were related to expected possible restrictions and lack of interest and understanding on behalf of local communities. It was pointed out that the establishment of the Natura 2000 site some years ago brought to a negative attitude in the local people in terms of having additional protected areas and additional burdens stopping the economical development.

The municipality of Tsarevo has clearly indicated in letter to MOEW that it did not want to join a potential biosphere reserve in the region of Strandzha Nature Park.

At the same time the municipal council of Malko Tarnovo has agreed to declare their part of the Strandzha Nature Park as a biosphere park.

The Municipality of Malko Tarnovo elaborated with some support of external experts the nomination form for revision of Uzunbudzhak BR and declaring a post-Seville BR in the lands of Malko Tarnovo municipality only.

The Strandzha Nature Park Directorate, the Ministry of forestry and food and the Executive Forestry Agency (which are key institutions which are in charge of the management and the use of the forestry areas which are crucial part of the territory) did not approve and did not sign the nomination. The argument of all these structures is that they need to wait for some more time during which to proceed working with the local communities and only after meeting full support and understanding to forward the nomination to the Secretariat. Besides, meanwhile they want to convince Tsarevo municipality also to join to a potential biosphere park. Thus, the whole nature park will be proposed as Biosphere park.

Despite the disagreement of the forestry institutions the nomination was considered at the meeting of the MAB National committee held on 20 September 2016. It was decided that the nomination may be forwarded to the MAB Secretariat, signed only by the Chair person of the MAB National Committee and the mayor of Malko Tarnovo municipality.

In this relation the MOEW wants to express its concern about sending the nomination with disapproval on behalf of the Forestry institutions and without their signatures. Therefore the MOEW and the Regional inspectorate of environment and water for the town of Bourgas decided not to sign nomination as well.

## ***II. Biosphere reserves for which no final decision has been taken by the local communities***

### **II.1. ALIBOTOUSH BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

#### **General information**

Alibotush was declared as a strict nature reserve with an area of ca. 528.8 ha in 1952. Since then, its surface area has been enlarged twice – in 1980 and 1985. In 2013 as a result of more precise measuring, the area of the reserve was estimated to 1638.1194 ha. It was initially established to protect the unique relic forests of *Pinus heldreichii*, *Pinus nigra*, *Abies borisii-regis* as well as rich plant and animal diversity with numerous rare and endangered species.

The reserve is situated in Slavyanka Mt. just next to the Bulgarian-Greek border. It falls within the territory of two municipalities – Hadzhidimovo Municipality, especially in the lands of Nova Lovcha and Paril villages, and Sandanski Municipality, in the lands of Goleshovo village.

#### **Management**

Currently the Regional Inspectorate of environment and water in Blagoevgrad town is responsible for the management of the biosphere reserve.

#### **Potential**

In its current boundaries Ali botush Biosphere reserve can not meet the Seville strategy requirements. There is a potential for revising of Ali botush biosphere reserve according to the Seville strategy by enlargement, including adjacent municipalities. However, **there is no support of the local authorities**. In the past three years (2014-2016) the MOEW has several times invited the two municipalities – Sandanski and Hadjidimovo to consider the establishment of a modern BR in the region. The municipalities did not show interest in joining to a post-Seville biosphere reserve.

By the end of September 2016, MOEW and the MAB National Committee cannot undertake more steps for revision of Alibotush BR. However, following the decision of the National MAB Committee of 20 September 2016, MOEW will send a final letter to the respective municipalities inviting them to cooperate for the revision of the reserve. If there is no answer within a year or if the answer is negative, then the National MAB Committee will recommend delisting of this BR from the World network of BRs.

### **II.2. BAYUVI DUPKI - DZHINDZHIRITSA BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

#### **General information**

Bayuvi dupki – Dzhindzhiritsa is located in Northern Pirin. It was declared as a reserve back in 1934 to protect the natural old-growth forests of *Pinus peuce* and *Pinus heldreichii*, which have an average age of about 250-300 years and also the great diversity of plant and animal species inhabiting these forests. Since 1979 it unites the reserves Bayuvi dupki (established in 1934), Segmentepe (established in 1947) and Malka Dzhindzhiritsa (established in 1952), and the areas between them. Currently, the whole reserve belongs to Pirin National Park's territory and covers 2873 ha.

#### **Management**

The Directorate of the Pirin National Park is responsible for the management of the reserve.

## **Potential**

In its current boundaries Bayuvi dupki – Dzhindzhiritsa BR can not meet the Seville strategy requirements. There is a potential for revising the biosphere reserve by considering the whole territory of Pirin National Park as well as the adjacent municipalities.

Pirin National Park may form only the core and buffer zones of a modern generation Biosphere reserve whereas the transition zone will be formed by the territory of the adjacent municipalities.

A project ‘Revitalizing the biosphere reserves in Bulgaria’, funded under the Participatory Program of UNESCO in 2008/2009, was carried out in the regions of Pirin and Western Stara planina, aimed at promoting the added value of the Biosphere reserves in the two model regions of Bulgaria.

In the past three years (2014-2016) the MOEW has several times invited the local authorities from the municipalities Bansko, Dobrinishte and Simitly to undertake steps for urgent revision of Bayuvi Dupki – Dzhindzhiritsa BR and establishment of a modern BR in the region of Pirin National park. The Pirin National Park Directorate has been closely involved in the national discussion and Expert Group for revision of the Bulgarian BRs. However, the local authorities did not show interest in establishing of a post-Seville biosphere reserve.

By the end of September 2016, the MOEW and MAB National Committee cannot undertake more steps for revision of Bayuvi Dupki – Dzhindzhiritsa BR. However, following the decision of the National MAB Committee of 20 September 2016, MOEW will send a final letter to the respective municipalities inviting them to cooperate for the revision of the reserve. If there is no answer within a year or if the answer is negative, then the National MAB Committee will recommend delisting of this BR from the World network of BRs.

## **II.3. BISTRISHKO BRANISHTE BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

### **General information**

Bistrishko Branishte was declared as a strict nature reserve with an area of 745 ha in 1934. Since then it has been enlarged twice and now covers 1061.6 ha. It was initially established to protect the beautiful landscape and the autochthonous flora of the area.

The reserve is part of Vitosha Mountain. It is in close proximity (less than 20 km) to the capital of Bulgaria – Sofia city. Therefore, the reserve is visited by thousands of tourists on the marked tourist trails. The local economy is not strongly dependent on the BR but the quality of life in the capital is dependent on the ecosystem services provided by the whole Vitosha Mts, incl. the biosphere reserve.

### **Management**

The reserve is managed by the Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water in the town of Sofia (RIEW – Sofia) under the MOEW.

### **Potential**

In its current boundaries Bistrishko Branishte Biosphere Reserve can not meet the Seville strategy requirements. There is a potential for its revising by considering the whole territory of Vitosha Nature park as well as the adjacent municipalities.

In the past three years (2014–2016) the MOEW has several times invited Sofia municipality to undertake steps to revise the reserve. Representatives of the municipality and municipal

council were invited and participated at the mission with the UNESCO experts in May 2016 in order to get to better know the Seville concept. However, the municipality did not show interest in establishing a post-Seville BR. That was clearly stated in a letter of the municipality to MOEW.

By 30 September 2016, the MOEW and the MAB National Committee cannot undertake more steps for revision of Bistrishko Branishte BR. However, following the decision of the National MAB Committee of 20 September 2016, MOEW will send a final letter to the respective municipalities inviting them to cooperate for the revision of the reserve. If there is no answer within a year or if the answer is negative, then the National MAB Committee will recommend delisting of this BR from the World network of BRs.

## **II.4. CHUPRENE BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

### **General information**

Chuprene was declared as a strict nature reserve with an area of 936.5 ha by Order No 358/09.02.1973 for protection of the northernmost large massifs of coniferous forests in the country. In 1979 the surface area of the reserve was enlarged to 1439.2 ha. In 2011 as a result of more precise measuring, the area of the reserve was estimated to 1451.9935 ha. It was initially established to protect the the only compact *Picea abies* forest in the Western Stara Planina Mts. in their natural state, as well as to protect some rare animals, e.g. the Western capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), the Red crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*), and the Wildcat (*Felis sylvestris*).

The reserve is situated in the Western Stara Planina Mts (the Balkan Range) just next to the Bulgarian-Serbian border. The reserve lies on the territory of two municipalities – Chuprene Municipality, especially in the lands of Chuprene, Replyana and Gorni Lom villages, and Belogradchik Municipality, in the lands of Stakevtsi village.

### **Management**

The Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water in the town Montana (RIEW – Montana) under the MOEW is responsible for the management and guarding of the reserve.

### **Potential**

In the last years (2014-2016) the MOEW has several times invited the local authorities from the municipalities of Chuprene and Belogradchik to undertake steps for revision of the biosphere reserve and offered its support. Representatives of the above municipalities were also invited to participate at the mission with the UNESCO experts in May 2016 in order to get to better know the Seville concept.

Chuprene Biosphere reserve was part of the project for revision of Bulgarian biosphere reserves, carried out in 2015-2016. Within the project several meetings with local municipalities were held aimed at raising the awareness about the benefits of BR for the development of the area. Part of the concerns expressed within the meeting in Chuprene municipality were related to lack of interest and understanding on behalf of local communities, as well as other issues of the region related to demographic problems, expected financial engagements of the municipalities, etc.

A nomination for establishment of Belogradchishki Skali Geopark under UNESCO was submitted by Belogradchik Municipality, however, the nomination was unsuccessful. A number of recommendations were received for improvement and possible re-submission of the nomination.

Despite the meetings the municipalities of Chuprene and Belogradchik did not embrace the idea for declaring of a post-Seville biosphere reserve. Moreover, the municipal council of Chuprene took a decision not to declare a post-Seville BR in the region.

By the end of September 2016, the MOEW and MAB National Committee cannot undertake more steps for revision of the current Chuprene BR. However, following the decision of the National MAB Committee of 20 September 2016, MOEW will send a final letter to the respective municipalities inviting them to cooperate for the revision of the reserve. If there is no answer within a year or if the answer is negative, then the National MAB Committee will recommend delisting of this BR from the World network of BRs.

## **II.5. MANTARITSA BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

### **General information**

The reserve is situated in Western Rhodope Mts. Core zone – 1071.6 ha; buffer zone – 248.3 ha. Established in 1968 for protection of the centuries-old primeval coniferous forests and the populations of the cock-of-the-wood and the brown bear. Declared a biosphere reserve in 1977.

According to the national legislation the area belongs to the strongest protection category - “reserve”, with very limited human activities.

The reserve is located on the territory of Rakitovo municipality.

### **Management**

The Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water in the town of Pazardzhik (RIEW – Pazardzhik) under the MOEW is responsible for the management and guarding of the reserve.

### **Potential**

In the past three years (2014–2016) the MOEW has several times offered support and invited the authorities from the municipality of Rakitovo to undertake steps for revision of Mantaritsa BR.

Mantaritsa BR was covered in the project for revision of Bulgarian BRs, carried out in 2015–2016. Within the project meetings with the municipality of Rakitovo and RIEW – Pazardzhik were held aimed at raising the awareness about the benefits of a BR for the sustainable development of the region. Part of the concerns expressed within the meetings were related to the management structure of a potential BR, the financial support that is expected to be provided from the municipality as well as the lack of interest and understanding on behalf of local community. It became obvious that more meetings and information are needed especially to outline the responsibilities of the municipality to support a BR.

By the end of September 2016, the MOEW and MAB National Committee cannot undertake more steps for revision of this BR. However, following the decision of the National MAB Committee of 20 September 2016, MOEW will send a final letter to the respective municipalities inviting them to cooperate for the revision of the reserve. If there is no answer within a year or if the answer is negative, then the National MAB Committee will recommend delisting of this BR from the World network of BRs.

## **II.6. PARANGALITSA BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

### **General information**

Designated in 1933 Parangalitsa is one of the oldest Bulgarian nature reserves. The reserve is situated on the south-east slopes of Rila Mountain within the boundaries of the Rila National Park. The area of Parangalitsa biosphere reserve is 1509.0 ha which includes only a core zone.

The reserve is located on the territory of Blagoevgrad municipality. According to the national legislation the area belongs to the category – “reserve” which has the strictest protection regime.

### **Management**

The Directorate of the Rila National Park is responsible for the management and guarding of the reserve and of the whole national park.

### **Potential**

There is a potential for revising of Parangalitsa BR according to the Seville strategy by considering the whole territory of Rila National Park (81 046 ha) as well as the adjacent municipalities.

Rila National Park is the largest national park in Bulgaria. The park was designed to conserve the natural heritage of the Rila Mountains as well as the local traditions, culture, and livelihoods linked with the area.

In the past three years (2014–2016) MOEW has several times offered support and invited the municipality of Blagoevgrad and the Rila National Park Directorate to undertake steps for revision of Parangalitsa BR and establishing of a modern-generation BR.

The municipality and the Rila National Park administration did not show interest in joining to a post-Seville BR.

By the end of September 2016, the MOEW and MAB National Committee cannot undertake more steps for revision of Parangalitsa BR. However, following the decision of the National MAB Committee of 20 September 2016, MOEW will send a final letter to the respective municipalities inviting them to cooperate for the revision of the reserve. If there is no answer within a year or if the answer is negative, then the National MAB Committee will recommend delisting of this BR from the World network of BRs.

## ***III. Biosphere reserves which revision is not supported by the local communities – the National MAB Committee recommends delisting of these BRs from the World network.***

### **III.1. DUPKATA BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

#### **General information**

Dupkata was declared as a strict nature reserve with an area of 65.2 ha by Order No 14827/29.06.1951 by the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria. Since then its surface area has been changed several times and now is 1210.8 ha declared by Order No 1700/17.12.1961 and by Order No 3899/15.09.1975. The reserve was initially established to protect the unique virgin forests and landscape, as well as its valuable mammal fauna. In 2007 was designated Sarnena Polyana Protected Site by Order No. 416/18.06.2007 with an area of 719.3 ha which plays a role of a buffer zone. The reserve is situated in Western Rhodopi Mts in the southern parts of Mt Batashka. Its territory ranges between 600 and 1300 m a.s.l.

The reserve is situated on the territory of one municipality – Batak Municipality, especially in the lands of Batak town and Fotinovo village.

### **Management**

The Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water in the town of Pazardzhik (RIEW – Pazardzhik) under the MOEW is responsible for the management and guarding of the reserve.

### **Potential**

In the past three years (2014–2016) the MOEW has several times invited the municipality of Batak for revision of Dupkata BR and offered its support.

Dupkata Biosphere reserve was included in the project for revision of Bulgarian BRs, carried out in 2015-2016. Within the project several meetings with the interested municipality of Batak and RIEW – Pazardjik were held aimed at raising the awareness about the benefits of a modern BR for the development of the area. The major concerns expressed at the meetings were related to fear of possible stronger restrictions and lack of interest and understanding on behalf of the local community. It was pointed that the establishment of Natura 2000 sites some years ago brought negative attitude among the local people for too many restrictions in the region stopping its economical development.

The municipality of Batak sent a letter to MOEW informing the Ministry that they do not want to join a potential post-Seville BR in the region.

By the end of September 2016, the MOEW and MAB National Committee cannot undertake more steps for revision of Dupkata BR due to lack of support by the local community. The MAB Committee recommends delisting of the site from the World network.

The letter of the municipality of Batak to MOEW (in Bulgarian) is attached.

## **III.2. KUPENA BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

### **General information**

The reserve is situated on the northern slopes of the Rhodope Mts. Core zone – 1759.2 ha; buffer zone – 1211.9 ha. Established in 1961 for protection of the extraordinary beautiful landscape and the rich flora and fauna in the area. Declared a biosphere reserve in 1977.

According to the national legislation the area belongs to the strongest protection category - “reserve”, with very limited human activities.

The reserve is located on the territory of two municipalities – Peshtera Municipality, especially in the lands of Peshtera town, and Bratsigovo Municipality, in the lands of Ravnogor and Rosovo villages.

### **Management**

The Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water in the town of Pazardzhik (RIEW – Pazardzhik) under the MOEW is responsible for the management and guarding of the reserve.

### **Potential**

In the past three years (2014–2016) the MOEW has several times offered support and invited the municipalities of Peshtera and Bratsigovo to undertake steps to revise Kupena BR.

The reserve was covered in the project for revision of Bulgarian biosphere reserves, carried out in 2015–2016. Within the project several meetings with local municipalities and RIEW – Pazardzhik were held aimed at raising the awareness about the benefits of a BR for the

sustainable development of the area. Part of the concerns expressed within the meeting in Peshtera municipality were related to lack of interest and understanding on behalf of local communities as well as the illegal logging.

Eventually the municipalities of Peshtera and Bratsigovo did not embrace the idea for declaring a post-Seville BR. Moreover, the municipalities of Peshtera and Bratsigovo sent letters to MOEW informing the Ministry that they do not want to join a potential post-Seville BR in the region.

By the end of September 2016, the MOEW and MAB National Committee cannot undertake more steps for revision of this BR due to lack of support by the local communities. The MAB Committee recommends delisting of the site from the World network.

The letters of the two municipalities to MOEW are attached to the Road map in Bulgarian.

### **III.3. KAMCHIA BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

#### **General information**

The reserve is situated in the lowermost course of Kamchia river near the Black Sea coast. The core zone covers 842.1 ha and is surrounded by a buffer zone of 230 ha. Lowest point - 0 m a.s.l. near the river mouth. Established in 1951 in order to protect the unique for Europe riparian forests – periodically flooded riverside forests. Declared a biosphere reserve in 1977.

According to the national legislation the area belongs to the strongest protection category - “reserve”, with very limited human activities.

It falls in the lands of Novo Oryahovo and Staro Oryahovo villages (Dolni Chiflik Municipality), and Bliznatsi village (Avren Municipality).

#### **Management**

The Regional Inspectorate of environment and water in the town of Varna (RIEW – Varna) under the MOEW is responsible for the management and guarding of the reserve.

#### **Potential**

In the past three years (2014–2016) the MOEW has several times invited the authorities from the local municipalities Avren and Dolni Chiflik to undertake steps for revision of Kamchia BR and offered support.

Kamchia BR was part of the project for revision of Bulgarian BRs, carried out in 2015-2016. Within the project several meetings with the two municipalities – Avren and Dolni Chiflik, were held aimed at raising the awareness about the benefits of a biosphere reserve for the sustainable development of the area. During the meetings in both municipalities the attendants wanted to know in more details the modern concept for BRs. However, the local authorities expressed their constraints to financially support the BR and stated other current priorities.

Eventually both municipalities did not embrace the idea for declaring of a post Seville biosphere reserve. Moreover, the municipality of Avren and Dolni Chiflik sent a letter to MOEW informing the Ministry that they do not want to join a potential post-Seville BR in the region.

Therefore, by the end of September 2016, the MOEW and MAB National Committee cannot undertake more steps for revision of this BR due to lack of support by the local communities. The MAB Committee recommends delisting of the site from the World network.

The letters of the two municipalities to MOEW are attached to the Road map in Bulgarian.