

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF
BULGARIAN BIODIVERSITY FOUNDATION
2008**

CONTEXT

The main topic of the political analysis at the end of the year was that in 2008 nothing special happened in Bulgaria and this is the good news. According to us many things happened in Bulgaria this year and no one of them is good news. 2008 was "the year of the scandals" with no political act or political figure unconnected to corruption, infringement of the laws or negligence of the undertaken commitments. Our second year as an EU member was marked with the sign of the increasing discontent from European Parliament, as well as the Bulgarian citizens. The European Commission asked Bulgaria to freeze several thousands millions euros funding under the European Union's pre-accession programmes SAPARD and PHARE. The only reaction of the government was to accuse EC in double standard. The attempts of the Prime-minister Stanishev to convince EC of the state efforts were shattered from the unprecedented and public accusation of corruption made by Mr. Barroso – "I should tell you that we will not allow some people to play political games with the Euro funds."

In the field of environment and applying of the European environmental legislation there is some good news. Scientists and NGOs could be proud with the evaluation of the EC for the establishment of Natura 2000 network with its 114 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in accordance with the Bird Directive and 229 Sites of Community Importance (SCI) in accordance with the Habitat Directive. In this way Bulgaria includes 33,8 % of its total area in the network and covers 94,6 % sufficiency for the implementation of the objectives of the Ecological network. With this high percentage Bulgaria takes one of the first places in Europe for the effectiveness of the Natura 2000 network.

Unfortunately the state is not so effective and the real announcement of the zones is very slow and allows the realization of many investment projects harming the habitats and species. The overbuilding and the infringement of all ecological principles in the seaside and mountains resorts leads to biodiversity loss and decrease of the opportunities for development of sustainable and winning tourism.

The other important success of the NGOs and especially "Let's remain nature in Bulgaria" Coalition was the high percentage of the public awareness for Natura 2000 settled after research of Eco-barometer. Bulgaria took the first place with the number of the citizens acquainted with the problems and possibilities of the network.

The reason is that while in the previous years we have had 2-3 drastic cases per year, today the problems requiring the reaction of the society are 3-4 per month. They became more difficult and take more and more efforts for solving. Unfortunately there are many cases when the economic interests destroy what have been created for years – Natura 2000 network, the system of the protected areas, management plans implementation, new harmonized national environmental legislation, etc.

The beginning of 2008 started hopefully with the news of financing of the projects from the sectorial operational programmes with EU funding. The inclusion of enormous funds in the infrastructural projects with short term adoption and complicated administrative procedures raise the question for their ecological advisability and civil control for their spending. Regardless of the permanent criticism and unprecedented sanctions from the European institutions, the corruption schemes and the administrative imperfections known from PHARE, ISPA and SAPARD programmes refer to the operational programmes. MOEW demonstrated total misbalance in own priorities concerning the procedures for financing of OP Environment 2007-2013. There are small funds and delayed procedures for biodiversity conservation and management of the natural resources compared to Water and Waste management sectors.

The integration of the conservation objectives in the water management started in 2008 with the identification of the main ecological problems for rivers valleys, consultative meetings with the society and preparation of the drafts of the river basin management plans (RBMP). The planning

process will end at the end of 2009, when RBMP should be finished.

All these "encouraging events" were accompanied with some significant scandals which completely demonstrate the attitude of the government towards the law and its implementation. The president of Bulgaria – G.Parvanov hunted in an Uzbekistan Reserve and shot endangered and very rare species (*Ovis ammon severtzovi*). Several months before that the Prime Minister Stanishev took part in the opening of the illegal lift and ski track in Rila National Park.

2008 ended with common protest of ecologists, students and farmers which will continue in 2009. This will be the beginning of a year of our discontent and society pressure for a change in the political chaos.

THE PROJECTS OF THE FOUNDATION

Several years ago BBF made clear priorities of its activities and chose 5 main directions where to concentrate the efforts of project preparation and implementation. These are the thematic fields relevant to the BBF mission. In 2008 BBF implemented 30 projects in these 5 directions.

I. Protected areas and species

Improving the legislation

1. The Forest Law

BBF together with the Association of the Parks prepared detailed proposal as an answer of the already started legislation initiative of the State Forestry Agency (SFA) for the change of the Forest Law in March.

After active lobbying our proposals were integrated in the "law texts" of the deputies Jane Janev and Evdokia Maneva. We took part in two sessions of the Parliamentary Forestry and Agriculture Commission where the Law was discussed. Unfortunately the opposition was not united and our proposals were not well supported no matter that many of the deputies are not against them.

On April 2nd BBF initiated an internet subscription against the forest exchange deals through the web site of the Coalition (www.forthenature.org). Till December 3rd 2 148 signatures were collected. There is absolutely intolerance from the whole society against the forestry exchanges, but no reaction from the government. We sent two open letters to the Prime Minister this subject, but the only result was a meeting with the SFA in May 30th and establishment of the working group for the Forest Law. This working group prepared a common proposal presented in the end of June at the Council of Ministers. Unfortunately the result of our activities was only the big media reaction and total rejection of these exchanges. Articles on this subject were published in almost all national and local media. Thanks to the cooperation with some deputies and Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (CEDB - GERB) the campaign has a political meaning which increases the public interest too. We negotiated with the deputy Mincho Christov to present the problem with the forestry exchanges to the Parliamentary Corruption Commission in July.

BBF prepared a letter to all deputies with the request to support texts in the new Forestry Law for elimination of the outrageous exchanges. In October at our request the Deputy Prime-Minister Mrs. Meglena Plugchieva met the representatives of the Coalition for the nature and promised to cooperate with them. During the same month BBF consulted the forestry bill of the deputy Ivan Sotirov from the opposition, which was billed in on October 23rd.

In November the deputy Vasil Kalinov from Coalition for Bulgaria billed in a proposal that no taxes would be applied to the change of the purpose of the forestry to ski installations, continuation of forest exchange deals and even selling (including forests – public ownership).

In the beginning of November a new bill for the change of the Law of the ownership and use of the agriculture lands was deposited in the Parliament. It also made provisions of such lands exchanges.

BBF followed all these processes and in the beginning of December started second subscription

against the forest exchange deals and changes of the Forestry Law (3596 signatures from 3rd to 22nd of December). Finally the Parliamentary majority again accepted the worst versions of the Law. That was the reason why BBF and the Coalition asked the citizens of Bulgaria to protest in front of the Parliament. After 2 days of protests and meetings with the Chairman of the Parliament, the Law was stopped. In 2009 it will be considered again.

2. The Law for hunting and protection of the game

As an answer of the already started legislation initiative of the State Forestry Agency (SFA) for the change of the Law for hunting and protection of the game in March BBF together with Balkani Society prepared a detailed proposal for the improvement of the law.

In April and May we discussed our proposals with the representatives of Association "Bulgarian Game" and SFA and they accepted many of them. Unfortunately at the end of June almost all of these proposals were rejected by the deputies from the Parliamentary Forestry and Agriculture Commission. The working group deposited the so called bill of Junal Tasim, which is in contradiction with the achieved agreements and environmental legislation. As an answer BBF prepared a press release against the changes of the Law and participated actively in a media campaign. This campaign lead to delay of first reading of the changes of the Law for hunting and protection of the game and common meeting between all interested sides in the beginning of July. Then we organized a press conference and media campaign for the Hunting Law, as well as a campaign among the deputies and CEDB (GERB). Official discussions with the Union of the hunters and fishermen and Association "Bulgarian Game" were organized. The deputy Evdokia Maneva deposited our proposals for discussion and second reading in Plenary Hall. A big part of our texts were accepted by the Parliamentary Forestry and Agriculture Commission but in spite of this the commission decided to prolong with a month the hunting season for the waterfowl and to accept many texts which served different interests.

Our answer was the support for the establishment of Coalition of the Independent Hunting Societies (CIHS). In partnership with WWF we supported the organization of their first press conference. On August 21st we started an internet subscription against the improper changes of the Hunting Law which collected 5 682 signatures from the inhabitants of 62 countries. In parallel we organized active media campaign and regular meeting with deputies from all parliamentary groups. On September 10th we participated in the protest of CIHS in front of the Parliament and in the beginning of October protested with the NGOs from the Coalition.

Conversations with about hundred deputies were held. In the beginning of October the Law was voted and almost all of our important proposals were accepted.

In December we presented art photos in frames of the Red breasted Gooses to 17 deputies as an appreciation for their cooperation during the whole process.

3. The Protected areas Law

At the end of April a proposal for the change of the Protected areas Law in the part for the rights of the parks' rangers was prepared. It was presented to the deputy Peter Beron.

Unfortunately finally he denied to deposit it because he believed the majority would not accept such changes. In 2009 we will continue to look for alternative ways to deposit the elaborated texts.

Activities for the protected areas

1. In the beginning of February BBF participated in commission for the enlargement of protected area Ognyanovo Sinitevski Rid. The commission accepted the proposal but unfortunately the MOEW held up the documents. After our lobbying in the middle of June the documents were deposited in the cabinet of Minister Chakarov, but were held up again. At the end of June the deputy Mrs. Maneva asked the Minister in the Parliament and he finally signed the order and published it in the State Gazette.

2. In the middle of May we organized a meeting with the Union of hunters and fishermen (UHFB) for preservation of Hunting ground Studen kladenetz from overbuilding. After the meeting BBF deposited in MOEW proposal for veto of lands purpose changes and building of 500 m zone around the dam beach in protected zone Studen kladenetz. In June we helped UHFB to deposit a proposal for protected area Studen kladenetz. On September 2nd MOEW assigned UHFB to prepare the documentation. BBF started its preparation and Rhodopi project would finance us with 2500 BGN.
3. On October 22 we deposited in MOEW the full documentation for announcement of Protected area Gerzovitza with total area of 10 460,81 ha.
4. On November 7th we deposited in MOEW the final version of the Management plan of protected area Vrushka chukka. The MP was signed by the minister in December and its publishing in State Gazette is on stand by.
5. In the middle of the year the Vice Minister Chavdar Georgiev committed himself to organize a meeting with the Minister for discussion of the protected areas, financing and implementation of the National Plan for biodiversity. Till now the minister didn't accept such invitation. In November, following our proposal the Coalition sent a letter to all members of the Parliamentary commission of Environment and water to improve the financing of the national parks. As a result of the increased pressure from the Parliament we hope that next year the situation with the insufficient financing of the national parks and reserves will be changed.
6. We made an active campaign among the deputies for saving the Directorate of the National Park Central Balkan in Gabrovo, not in Lovech. As a result of different conversations and active NGO's and society reaction the location of the Directorate was preserved.
7. Four proposals for new protected territories in the Kostinbrod municipality have been submitted to the MoEW with the signatures of the BBF executive director and the mayor of the municipality. These are proposals for protected site "Beledie han", natural monument "Karstic spring near the Bezden village", protected site "Wet meadows in the Ranislavtsi site", and protected site "The Oaks". The answer of the ministry on the conformity of these proposals is expected.

Biodiversity conservation

1. In the beginning of June we organized check ups with RIEW Pazardjik and Regional Police Department Septemvri for illegal stuff animals in Varvara village, Pazardjik region. Some prepared raptors were confiscated.
2. We participated in Hunting and Natura 2000 workshop in Athens and we made a presentation of the biodiversity of Bulgaria and the cooperation between hunters and nature conservators.
3. We organized field researches of the distribution of the Capercaillie in Western Rhodope which were reflected in the GIS date base. Analysis of the economical importance of the sustainable hunting of Capercaillie was made, as well as a comparison of the incomes from the hunting and from the lumbering. The results will be published in 2009.
4. We prepared the Term of reference for the Action plan of the Capercaillie which was approved by MOEW. On August 8th SFA signed a contract with BBF-Eastern Rhodope for the preparation of the Action plan of the Capercaillie and its habitats in Rhodope Mountain.
5. On July 16th we initiated working meeting for actualization of the Action plan for Balkan

Chamois. Many changes were made, but the process was blocked because of our engagements with Forestry and Hunting Laws.

6. In October our colleagues from WWF Greece put GPS GSM transmitters to 4 Black Vultures which were provided thanks to the joint project with BBF. Till the end of the year more than 2000 signals from the movement of these birds were received. The researches will continue this year.
7. Researches of flora, fauna, amphibians, reptiles, birds and bats were held for the establishment of the future protected area Vitata stena.

II. Green Belt and Natura 2000

Osogovo Mountain in the Balkan Green Belt

In 2008 continued the collection of information about biodiversity and socio-economical characteristics of the region in Osogovo Mountains, including mapping of the habitats after analysis of a satellite picture. Apart from the coordinator and assistant of the project another 20 experts in different fields are involved. The project is implemented at the same time in Bulgaria and Macedonia in cooperation with Macedonian ecological society, Natura nova and Movement for sustainable development Kochani. Besides the support of the Frankfurt zoology society (FZS) an additional financing was provided by the Swiss organization Pro Natura for more than 3 years.

In March a meeting on the report of the results of the field researches and mapping was organized in a hunting hut in Osogovo. During the meeting a methodology and activities between the leading team and the experts were coordinated. A methodology for the future activities of the project in 2008 was chosen.

Many meetings were organized with the representatives of the local authorities of Kjustendil and Nevestino Municipalities, RIEW Pernik, Regional Forestry Kjustendil. The objectives were to introduce the ideas and the aims of the project and to find opportunities for cooperation. In July we organized a meeting with MOEW and NNPS, including vice minister Chavdar Georgiev, FZS and Pro Natura for introducing project activities and ensuring institutional support. MOEW expressed their principal support for the project and their wish to participate in a meeting with all interested sides. Meanwhile because of the problems and misunderstanding about Natura 2000 network establishment and insufficient preliminary information for the project, a very negative attitude among the local communities arose. People were against the establishment of new protected areas in the region and a new round of meetings with the interested sides was organized, as well as a deep situational analysis, which should precede the communicational strategy of the project and action plan for 2009.

In April representatives from BBF and Directorate of Nature Park Vitosha participated in a workshop in Probistip, Macedonia. The idea was to introduce the categories of the protected areas in both countries and to discuss their applicability for Osogovo.

In June we organized a study trip for participants from Macedonia and Bulgaria in the trans-border region of Western Stara Planina (16-19.06.2008). The idea was to exchange experience and to share good practices of management of protected areas and natural resources, sustainable tourism, small projects program, etc.

A social survey for the environmental adjustments in the region of Osogovo Mountain in Bulgaria was conducted, as well as an analysis of the opportunities for sustainable development of the region.

The work of the students' eco-club (15 participants) from the schools in Kjustendil was supported -

three expeditions and field trip in Osogovo were organized.

Favorable conservation status of species and habitats from Natura 2000 in Bulgaria

The project's work finished in October. As a main product of the project Guidelines for Favorable conservation status of species and habitats from Natura 2000 in Bulgaria were developed. It covered 85 habitat types, 90 animal species and 23 vascular plant species and mosses. Marine habitats, fishes and mammals were not included in the Guidelines, because of the lack of information for them in Bulgaria. During the course of work of the project apart from the management team (team leader, local team leader and coordinator of the working groups) 30 Bulgarian and foreign experts were involved.

Summary of the Guidelines in Bulgarian and English will be published soon, as well as full text on CD in Bulgarian. The whole information will be distributed through our special web site www.natura2000.biodiversity.bg

The project was implemented by Wageningen International in cooperation with BBF, Balkani Wildlife Society and Denmark Company Orbikon

Apart from the preliminary meetings with the main project beneficiaries – MOEW and SFA, several presentations of the Guidelines were organized in Sofia, Shumen, Stara Zagora in October. Representatives of the following institutions took part in the discussions: MOEW- 3, RIEW - 13, Regional Forestry Directorate – 12, Nature parks Directorate – 12, National Park Directorates - 3, Institutes of BAS – 3, universities – 2, NGOs – 3.

On the third and last meeting of the Guiding/Controlling committee of the project support and approval of the Guidelines was expressed and some recommendations for its future applying were given. On the project's closing ceremony the Guidelines were officially presented by His Excellency Willem van Ee – the Ambassador of the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Sofia to the vice minister of environment and water – Mr. Atanas Kostadinov who declared that MOEW would use the guidelines.

Bio-agriculture in Natura 2000 zones – A Centre of Environmental Information and Education implementing the project in partnership with BBF, Balkani Wildlife Society and WWF.

In 2008 a project's working group was established, which identified all interested sides in both pilot regions of the project.

Several working meetings and visits in the area of Natura 2000 zone Pirin were organized and people who had special interest to participate were identified.

In 2009 the following activities will be organized: a study of the legislation requirements about the measures of the management of Natura 2000 zones; 2 seminars for farmers for presentation of the compensatory measures for 2009; a preparation of the Guidelines in support of the local authorities for management of Natura 2000 zones.

Conservation of significant biodiversity of the Belasitsa Mountains through involvement of local communities in ecotourism development –BELASSITSA BRANCH (a continuation from 2007)

The implementation of the project directly contributed to the establishment of the newest Nature park in Bulgaria – NP Belasitza. BBF was the initiator and the main force for the declaring of the park. On December 28th 2007 the Minister of the Environment signed Order № RD-925 and

announced the eleventh nature park in Bulgaria with a total area of 11732,43 ha.

The development of the eco-tourism in Belasitza Mountain within the frame of the project is related to one of the main objectives of this category protected areas – a development of sustainable tourism. The direct involvement of the local communities in the development of the eco-tourism contributed for the better understanding of the advantages of the Nature park. The increased commitment of the local communities in the future will be a guarantee for sustainable management of the natural recourses in the region of Belasitza Mountain.

Within the frame of the project many information meetings were organized for increasing the awareness and motivation of the local communities, as well as dozens consultations with some of these 60 people who declared their interest to provide eco-tourist services and products. Several special trainings for them were organized:

- A training for guiding and hospitality

The training collected 37 people in Moravsko selo bio-hotel, where the participants have possibilities to study more about the general principles of the sustainable tourism, national and international legislation, systems for defining the tourist services quality, cares for the clients, as well as the good practices and examples in the field of eco-tourism in the country and abroad.

- A training for guiding and interpretation

The participants (31 people) were introduced with the main principles of the guiding, responsibilities of the guide, the specifics of the group psychology, the relationships between the leader and the group.

- A study trip

The main objective of the study trip was to exchange experience, introducing a good examples of development of ecotourism and rural tourism in the region of Strumjani, Razlog and Smolyan Municipalities. The participants were put in a position of tourists and "tested" eco-tourist product, including interpretative trails, cultural objects, interesting nature monuments.

Important part of the project are educational and PR events, organized in the region of Belasitza.

Till now we have organized 20 educational events – lectures, celebrations, exhibitions, etc. More than 1200 students participated in the events. Through the media campaign "Be Green!" organized in cooperation of the Municipal radio Bella (Petrich) and radio Blagoevgrad were realized 20 broadcasts. Six experts from the state institutions and NGOs were involved in the campaign.

The biggest success of the project is the development of the tourist infrastructure on the territory of Belasitza. It includes 3 long and 7 short routes for walking and bike-tourism, and also 2 interpretative routes – "The life of the Chestnut" and "Butterflies and Flowers of Belasitza".

Another important project activity was the application of energy efficiency methods. Five working meetings were organized and successful negotiations with Petrich Municipality were held for co-financing of the chosen public buildings. After several discussions the children gardens in Samiuilovo and Kolarovo villages were selected bbbbas model buildings. The agreement for installing of 7 sun collectors was signed between BBF-Belasitza branch and Municipality.

In the beginning of 2009 a marketing plan for preparation and offering of several eco tourism programs in Belasitza will be developed.

A promotion of the Regional trademark of Strandja Nature Park –STRANDJA BRANCH (a continuation from 2007)

This year BBF and Strandja Nature park continued their cooperation for the trademark. In February a logo was chosen, in March a big meeting with all interested owners was organized. More than 60 people participated in the presentation for the role and benefits of the trademark. Many questions were discussed and recommendations were given. Later special group for certification was organized with representatives of Central Balkan and Rila National Parks. The group visited all interested

owners, made evaluation of the houses and gave them some recommendations. Special products and materials were made for the future owners of the trademark. An official meeting was organized in December for presenting the certificates. The documents for the certification are deposited in the Patent Bureau.

Eco-tourism development in the Western Frontier Mountains (a new project funded by GEF SGP), as a tool for biodiversity conservation

The project is developed as a part of the Green belt initiative, which is led by BBF in Bulgaria. The idea is to connect Foundation's activities in Belasitza and Osogovo mountains and to develop tourist products for decreasing the pressure from the local people to the nature.

The project started with some field researches of the Frontier Mountains and a preparation of a report on the potential of the region for tourism development with recommendations and ideas for the local administrations.

Up to now 2 walking, 2 biking and 2 water routes were developed and marked. The walking routes are situated in Maleshevska mountain and on the border between Ograjden and Maleshevska Mountains. The routes follow the existing dirt roads connecting the villages in order to direct the tourists to use the services offering by the local people (accommodation and food). For the walking routes the requirements for tourist marking in Bulgaria were followed. In the spring we will put the route panels. The bike routes were prepared with the support of Bikearea society. One of them is situated in Vlahina Mountain and it is for prepared bikers and there is also an easier one on the dyke of Struma River from Kresna to Strumjani. The Water routes are also two – one extreme in Kresna gorge and one easier for families with kids from Kresna to Strumjani. The routes are planned to prevent the disturbance of the Otters. In the spring of 2009 special panels will be put in the river according to the requirements of the world system for marking of water routes.

All the routes were marked with the support of 50 volunteers from all over the country.

Regional meeting of the European Green Belt initiative

The second meeting of the South-Eastern European partners of the European Green Belt was held in Blagoevgrad on October 19-22. „Mapping Synergies – Branding Ideas“- the motto of the meeting brought together about 50 participants from the countries alongside the South-Eastern European Green Belt. In addition to long-term partners, new participants from several countries from the region joined the initiative. The focus of the meeting was on the Green Belt in South-Eastern Europe, including sharing experience on the last five years of the initiative's existence and on the numerous activities carried out while paying special attention to the future development of the initiative.

The main subjects for the discussions were: how to increase the popularity of the initiative; development of projects for PR of the Green Belt regions; development and certification of local products and services. The work for revision of Working programme started for support of new common activities of this Pan European initiative.

The participants visited a very positive example of trans-boundary cooperation in nature conservation and regional development in the Belasitsa trilateral border area between Bulgaria, Greece and F.Y.R. Macedonia. During the Belasitsa International Forum hosted by the local municipality of Petrich, the partners from Kerkin National Park (Greece), Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation and the NGO Planetum (Strumica, F.Y.R. Macedonia) presented their joint efforts in this trilateral border area and celebrated the newest Nature Park in Bulgaria – Belasitsa Nature Park declared as such in November 2007. A folk group from Samuilovo village, which lies in the foothills of Belasitsa Mountain presented a folk dance and vocal singing as a part of the rich cultural heritage in the region.

The meeting was organized by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), the implementing partner, the Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation BBF, in partnership with the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water, and with the financial support of the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) (www.bfn.de).

Pre-project researches and preparation of a project for biodiversity conservation of the area of Kozlodui Municipality

The objective of the project is the conservation and improvement of the management of the biodiversity for sustainable development and improvement of the lifestyle in Municipality of Kozlodui. This will be achieved through a full and qualitative project for biodiversity conservation of the Municipality and filling up the form of the structural funds of EU.

Meetings and discussions with the interested sides were organized. Situational analysis was made and actual information was collected. The measures of the biodiversity conservation were identified, as well as activities for encouragement of sustainable economic development and use of the natural recourses in the Municipality, formulated as project activities and indicators.

Application form with the requirements of OP Environment 2007-2013 was filled up, including budget and technical specifications.

Three additional projects ideas were developed for application to other financial sources (National Strategy Plan for Rural development, PUDOOS, Trans-border programme Romania – Bulgaria). Also we discussed other ideas with the people from the Municipality for future proper financing.

Biodiversity conservation in the Kostinbrod municipality through sustainable management of the natural resources and environmental education

In 2008 the mapping and monitoring of the biodiversity in the Natura 2000 zones on the Kostinbrod municipality territory was followed. Specialists from the BAS institutes have been engaged; their reports are being analyzed. The information collected during the scientific studies is being incorporated into the data base. On the basis of the scientific data four proposals for new protected territories have been elaborated and submitted to the MoEW.

The public awareness and education program was implemented. The community centers and libraries have been provided with books, updated information on the biodiversity of the municipality, pictures. Extra-class events have been organized for the schools. Many of the students have taken part in the educational visit of the Ranislavtzi wetland and in the student's competition "Natura 2000 – the nature of my country".

With the participation of BBF as project partner three eco-tourism infrastructure sites have been equipped – in Beledie han, near the karstic springs of Bezden and in the Ranislavtzi site. They include interpretative panels presenting the biodiversity of the region.

The activities of this project will continue in 2009. The data base will be further developed, the schools will be equipped with interactive and information modules, a web site and a brochure on the nature richness of the municipality will be prepared, training workshops with teachers of biology, geography and ecology will be organized, actions for cleaning the valuable wetlands will be done.

The Marine Area 2 Mai – Durankulak Biodiversity Conservation And Public Awareness

In 2008 the BBF – Kaliakra branch was a partner to the Romanian NGO Mare Nostrum from Konstanta in the implementation of project encouraging the exchange between the border regions of the villages Durankulak and 2 mai in favour of the protection of the marine biodiversity of the Black sea. The Kaliakra information center of BBF in Balgarevo was implementing a program in the schools of the municipalities of Shabla and Kavarna including lectures, presentations, field trips and cleaning

actions.

Two international workshops were organized – in Konstanta from 30.06 to 1.07.2008 and in Varna from 13 to 14.11.2008, with the participation of representatives of municipal and state institutions and NGOs of the two countries. The concerned Bulgarian state bodies have not been present on the meetings. The participants made an appeal to the Bulgarian and Romanian state administration for effective protection of the endangered Black sea biodiversity.

III. Rivers and river ecosystem

Protection of the river habitats and sustainable management of the flood risk in the watershed of Ossam River

The project aims to study the management problems of Osam river basin, to propose integrated actions for biodiversity conservation and flood prevention and to involve the stakeholders active in this field.

The project contributes to the implementation of the European policies in regard of the biodiversity conservation (Bird Directive 79/401/EEC, Habitat Directive 92/43/EEC), integrated water management (Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EEC) and sustainable flood risk management (Floods Directive 2007/60/EEC).

The project started with selection of sites for demonstration actions in the middle stream of Osam river. Field researches, data collection, hydro-technical and biological assessment was implemented in 2008. The project activities supplemented the BBI-MATRA funded project "Introducing the nature-friendly farming in Natura 2000". A detailed proposal for direct conservation actions was developed in result. It includes floodplain and river arms restoration, re-forestation or optimization of the land use within the Natura 2000 site "Obnova-Karaman dol". The possible actions for habitat restoration and flood mitigation were assessed in terms of the potential impact on the conservation status and hydro-engineering feasibility in order to prepare a financing proposal to the EU funds (National Operational Programme Environment 2007-2013). The project team is in active collaboration with the municipalities.

The stakeholders will be involved in the elaboration of Action plan for sustainable flood risk management by workshop, envisaged for March 2009 and expert meetings. Establishment of Sub-basin commission for Osam river will be proposed.

IV. Educational programs

Out of class activities for development of ecological awareness, art skills and wide conservation culture of the students in Plovdiv, Bourgas and Blagoevgrad regions

The objective of the project is to involve the students in the popularly applicable model for out of class activities and regional competitions for popularizing of Natura 2000 network.

Several guidelines for the students are developed:

- One for Natura 2000 competition with information about the network, protected areas categories, protected species in Bulgaria, world threatened species, etc.
- A colorful booklet – guidelines for the work in the study circle "Biodiversity and art" – especially for the primary schools;

For the support of the teachers were prepared:

- Methodology, study programme and didactic tools for the organizing of study circle "Biodiversity and art"
- This activity was implemented by the BBF experts, together with teachers for methodology and fine arts from the University of Plovdiv and primary teachers, leading the pilot circles

- in Plovdiv (6 experts)
- During the period from July to December the materials for the work of the circle were prepared. A study panel with 28 trees and bushes from the park and the forest was printed for every class room.
- Handbook for the teacher about the methodology and program of the study circle "Biodiversity and art"
- The handbook is elaborated by BBF expert, together with a teacher for methodology and fine arts from the University of Plovdiv.
- A Print out of the booklet for self-preparation of the students from Blagoevgrad for the regional competition Natura 2000.

Within the frames of the project the study circles "Biodiversity and art" are organized in 3 schools-partners from Plovdiv. They are visited by 40 kids from 3rd grade and 41 from 4th grade. The lessons started in the beginning of November and would continue till June 2009. For every lesson there is a discussion and instructions for the primary teachers, who lead the circles.

Students activities

In 2008 BBF continued to develop the traditional activities with the students. During the whole year every Wednesday in the Biology Faculty of the University of Sofia lectures were held, leaded by the most prominent experts in Bulgaria. The lectures were very popular and were visited by 30 to 100 people. For the third year there was a field training for the students from 1st to 6th of May. The camp Kartali (Vultures) brought together more than 70 students from all over the country. Interesting information for the biodiversity and some violations in the region were collected.

In the beginning of August we took part in the Beglika Free Fest (<http://beglika.org/>) The Capercaillie was the symbol of the Fest. Some very interesting ideas for the future activities were collected proper for different types of nature lovers – bird watchers, alpinists, bikers, oarsmen, etc. The implementation of such ideas will reach all these different groups with their specific need of wild nature and will unite them for its preservation.

In August we participated in the round of the Dam Studen kladenetz together with a group of oarsmen. They generated some very interesting ideas about Kartali 2009 and its development through different nature related attractions and involvement of many new and different people. In October we organized a group of 14 experts, volunteers and students to participate in the workshop for the fires in Greece.

In November many students were volunteers for marking and creating of bicycle, walking and water routes in the Western Border Mountains.

V. Coalition "To remain Nature in Bulgaria"

Because of the increasing number of the violations against the Bulgarian nature, in 2008 the Coalition was more active, better organized and more supported by the society.

- Taking the campaign on an European level, work with the European organizations, institutions and media, using the control mechanisms given us from EU

Up to now the Coalition "To remain Nature in Bulgaria" deposited 5 complains in the European commission. Two of them, regarding insufficiency of Natura 2000 network in Bulgaria were deposited last year. Three of them were prepared this year – for Kaliakra, Irakli and Rila (the last two of them were implemented as a part of the project funded by Open Society Institute). The subscription of Rila saving collected about 150 000 signatures and it was submitted to the European institutions too.

In April it was deposited in the European Parliament together with a petition for destroying Natura

2000 zones in Bulgaria and detailed description of the cases. A public event was organized for the depositing the subscription in the European Commission and, which was accepted personally by the Commissioner for the Environment DG Mr. Stavros Dimas.

http://forthenature.org/gallery/submission_of_the_petition_about_saving_rila_mountain_in_the_eu_comission_08052008

During the last 4 months many questions about threatened sites in Natura 2000 zones were raised at the meetings of the EU Parliament (EP). In spite of the fact that these are hot cases in Bulgaria the questions were asked not from Bulgarian members of EP, but from foreign members. Many of these foreign members of EP visited Bulgaria and were accompanied by the members of the Coalition. Margarete Auken, (Denmark), Kalenbah (Germany) и David Hammerstein (Spain) from the European Greens in EP visited different hot spots – illegal lift near Panichiste, the enlargement of Borovetz ski-resort, the illegal construction site of Crash 2000 building company in Strandja Nature park, illegal building constructions in Irakli. They reacted very emotionally to these “unforgettable views” and shared their experience with the media about the significant importance of Natura 2000 zones in Europe and their possibilities for future use.

We asked some international organizations for their support for different campaigns. We used our personal contacts as well as membership of NGOs from eco-family in international organizations. Eleven European organizations: CEEWEB, BirdLife International, EUROPARKS federation, European Environmental Bureau, Scottish Natural Heritage, Mountain Protection Commission, Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme, Euronature, WWF, Friends of the Earth and IUCN asked the Bulgarian government to take urgent administrative measures for saving Rila National Park and proposed Natura 2000 zone Rila buffer.

During the last months a special interest from the foreign media was raised, related to nature conservation and tourism development in Bulgaria and their economical aspects. For the first time journalists from big media like Financial Times looked for our opinion. Analysis for the economical development of the tourist regions in Bulgaria and consequences for the nature were investigated.

- Bulgarian level of the campaign: development of the threats for the Bulgarian nature, activities of the experts and civil groups in the Coalition for saving of the nature.

Emblematic for saving of Rila and Bulgarian nature became the project “Super Panichiste”. At this moment the campaign for Rila saving focuses huge civil support and became a symbol of the Coalition “To remain Nature in Bulgaria”. “Citizens for Rila” and experts from the Coalition NGOs organized different and permanent activities for Rila saving: public demonstrations, signing a petition, articles and presence in the media, press conferences, photos, films and reports for the project development, regular signals to the Bulgarian institutions. All this became a base of the Complain for Rila. The big success of the civil campaign were the tours in the country as well as information meetings, discussions and collecting ideas about Rila saving. The towns of the tours were among the most active in the activities for Rila. Unfortunately the campaign for Rila has just begun.

- The threats for Strandja Nature Park continue

The investors and the Mayor of Tzarevo Municipality continued to look for any legal or illegal ways to build the last remaining wild pieces in the eastern part of the Nature park. On January 11th the public hearing of the Master Spatial Plan of Tzarevo Municipality was organized. The Plan foresees full overbuilding of the arable land and forest areas, situated close to the sea. BBF took an active role in the hearing and deposited an expert statement in the Municipality. The Coalition and many scientists presented their statements too. Rositza Zlatanova was very involved in the whole process. We participated in different media presentations. We have met many local people and discussed with them some law aspects and future activities. The building of Crash 2000 is still frozen but not destroyed.

In April the plan was sent back after the session of MOEW, but unfortunately in August the Plan was officially adopted by MOEW and Ministry of Regional Development. The Coalition protested in

the Supreme Court.

- The building in Irakli started

Unfortunately Irakli is still not saved. The EC asked for additional information about the damages over zones of Bird Directive. In spite of the proofs and arguments sent by us, EC answered that the buildings in Irakli started before January 2007 and are not in EU jurisdiction. This threatens Irakli procedure to be closed. Our plans are to not allow finishing of the building project in Irakli. This is important not only for Irakli, but for the nature conservation movement in Bulgaria.

- Save Bulgarian Forest, campaign "Not changes of the forest for concrete"

Many of the Eco-family efforts were directed to the changes of the Forestry Law. The following steps were made: collection of information, problem analyses, and document with 10 simple steps necessary for saving the Bulgarian forest. A petition was prepared, press releases were sent and press conference was organized for the media and public awareness.

- Bringing lawsuits and securing a legal protection of the protected areas and zones

During the project the support of the "Green lawyers" to the NGOs and the Coalition continued. It included legal advices, consultations and legal protection in the court and other state institutions and last, but not least developing a legal documentation.

The legal advices were related to the structure of the Coalition and its registration as a juridical body or civil society, registration of the logo and the name of the Coalition, etc. (lawyer Svilen Ovcharov). BBF and 2 other NGOs (For the Earth and Green Balkans) were consulted by Pavel Pavlov and Ivailo Nikolov about Master Spatial Plan of Tzarevo. This allows better participation in the public hearing and a preparation of a strategy for future protection of the habitats in Strandja NP. Legal support with advices and consultations was provided in relation with EC Complains, prepared by NGOs, members of the Coalition (lawyer Veselin Paskalev)

A representative of the Trustee, as well as other organizations, members of the Coalition in front of the Supreme administrative court was made by lawyers Svilen Ovcharov and Veselin Paskalev. In addition "the Green lawyers" maintain blog for information and legal advices about cases of infringement, changes of legislation, etc. (<http://ecopravo.blogspot.com>)

- Strengthening of the Coalition "To Remain Nature in Bulgaria"

The enlargement of the Coalition requires the necessity of open a discussion about the rules and the procedures for its functioning. Several meetings and mailing discussions were organized for defining "friend" and "member", rules, vision and role of the Coalition. The idea is to have a better coordination and respect between the members.

As a part of the discussion the status of the Coalition was considered. The decision now is to continue as an informal and very open structure, but it is urgent to reserve our name and logo.

- PR of the Coalition

The Coalition is well presented in the media. With the support of "friends" of the Coalition (The Wall shop) were published brochures, which were used in public events.

The role of the web site www.forthenature.org is very important for the success of the Coalition. It is familiar not only by the citizens, but the media.. All available information is published there – news, actions, press releases, documents, statements, films, photos. There is a functioning forum, as well as English, French and German versions.

THE FUNCTIONNING OF THE FOUNDATION

Meetings of the BBF Board

In 2008 two regular meetings of the BBF Board have been held – on 26.03 in Sofia and on 10.07

in Vladya. According to the BBF Statute, the Board has accepted the annual reports and budgets of the Foundation, and has been steering the strategic development of the organization.

The Board of BBF consists of the same members:

Bertrand Sansonnens
Bouryana Konaklieva
Gottlieb Dandliker
Krassimir Dechev
Dr. Plamen Dimitrov
Dr. Romyana Stoilova

Financial analysis

During 2008 - the first year of BBF without the SDC's core financial support - the budget was planned as negative (-37'900 BGN) but measures for increase of the incomes and reduction of the charges have been foreseen. The results of the implementation of the budget are presented in the attached Financial report, based on the accepted budget sheet (Board meeting #15 on 10.07.2008) with columns added showing the incomes and expenditures reported for 2008. The general balance is still negative: -28'034 BGN. This amount will be taken out from the capital of BBF. (In addition to that, based on previous decisions of the Board some 10'942 BGN are taken out from the Reserve fund for specific projects.)

The turnover of BBF in 2008 has been of 654'432 BGN (incomes) and 682'465 BGN (expenditures). By the end of 2008 the capital of BBF (including the depreciated long-term assets) is 83'890 BGN, the Reserve fund (established in the frame of the SDC funded Matching instrument in the period 2005-2007) has 167'574 BGN, and the so called "free reserve" is 31'394 BGN.

Analyzing the incomes sources, the international donor agencies are keeping the first place with 37,02% (UNDP/GEF, Matra) together with some EU financial instruments with 16,80% of the incomes. The share of private foreign foundations and NGOs is important - 27,68% (Frankfurt Zoological Society, Open Society, Pro Natura, IUCN). The funding from Bulgarian governmental (4,46%), municipal (2,66%) or private sources (2,55%) is relatively small. Insignificant remains the share of the donations and bank interests (less than 1%). The commercial activities have given 5,76% of the total incomes for the year.

The general observation is that none of the approaches planned for solving the financial problems of BBF has been completely successful in 2008. The new "big" projects have not been submitted or approved in 2008, the expected incomes from donations have not been collected, the eco-tourism activities have not started in a way to generate incomes. Instead of that, the efforts of the team have been spread over more than 30 small or medium projects - some of them without any contribution to the administrative costs of the foundation.

In 2009 the financial crisis will further decrease the opportunities to attract donations or to sell products and eco-tourism services. The main efforts of the team are oriented to the EU funded operational programs as well as the European Economic Area (Norwegian funds). The funding opportunities are monitored constantly and decisions for application are taken ad hoc. This situation is giving the impression of un-security and lack of strategic orientation of the Foundation. Further discussions in the team and with the Board, use of external advises and strategic planning process is foreseen for the first half of 2009.

BBF Public relations

- **Year of the Orchids**

2008 was announced as a Year of the Orchids. We've printed the traditional calendar with 2000 edition. We made a plan for some simple activities with our partner - the Botany Garden, but it

was not implemented.

- **„Mammals important for conservation in Bulgaria“**

BBF agreed to support the distribution of the new very quality edition of the book „Mammals important for conservation in Bulgaria“. It is the work of 5 scientists and nature conservators – Vasil Popov, Nikolai Spasov, Teodora Ivanova, Boryana Mihova and Kiril Georgiev. The book was published by Dutch Mammal Society (DMS) in cooperation with the National Nature and History Museum and Institute of Zoology-BAS. The idea is to use money from the sales for mammals' projects. We have organized an official presentation of the book in the NNHM in April. There is a special plan for PR of the book to be implemented according to our contract with DMS.

- **Concert for the new Nature park Belasitza**

In April we have organized a big concert in Petrich for the new NP Belasitza. On this way we expressed our gratitude to the local people from the town and the villages. A rich musical and dancing programme was prepared and some guests from Sofia and Melnik participated in the concert. There were many official representatives and not so many spectators. The organization of the concert was perfect and prove not for the first time that BBF team is very well working together.

- **Free in nature – Capercaillie Fest Beglika**

BBF in cooperation with Bikearea and other organizations initiated Beglika fest in the Rhodopi Mountains - a brand new festival for music, sports and active way of living. There was very big interest and 3000 people from all over the country and having different interests (nature, music, and adventures) took a part in it. The enthusiasm of the participants and the good media /broadcasting gave us reasons to believe that it was really a very successful event.

www.capital.bg/show.php?storyid=538023

- **Biopark**

As a continuation of the last year idea for presentation of different faces of the green idea trough Green Fair, in 2008 BBF in partnership with Bioselena, Gorichka and BioBulgaria organized the so called Biopark.

The participants presented hundred products – certified bio-food and cosmetics, traditional Bulgarian foods and crafts, handbags from billboards and live Christmas trees.

The event included rich programme with presentations for bio-production, certification, social responsibility, ecology and health. Every day at lunch time a special bio menu was presented by Uti Bachvarov and his colleagues.

BBF' stand was used by the Coalition "To remain nature in Bulgaria" for different programme and products selling – T-shirts, bags, trees, carpets from Chiprovtsi, etc. The signature or Rila and Vitoshka were available for the visitors too. The photo exhibitions "The Earth from below" and "Rila - pure and holy" were part of the event too.

- **Annual awards for biodiversity**

The nominations for the Awards were collected on time, but insufficient funds of BBF ruined the organization of the ceremony. So we interrupted the good tradition but believe then next year everything will be well organized.

- **DMS campaign**

Unfortunately the development of the campaign was not so successful. We could not find a pro bono team for the preparation of TV clip and thus decrease the incomes from the campaign, because the people didn't heard about our campaign.

Participation in international meetings

Petko Tzvetkov:

- Celebration of the 150 Anniversary of Frankfurt Zoological Society, September 25-29, Frankfurt, Germany
- The World Conservation Congress of IUCN, October 5-14 2008, Barcelona, Spain
- QLF alumni retreat, November 20-23, Kotor, Montenegro

Stefan Avramov:

- Black Sea / East Mediterranean Workshop, Promotion of Natura 2000 in the community of wildlife recreational users (hunters and anglers), June 23-24, Amalia Athens Hotel & Schinias-Marathon National Park, Greece
- Seminar «Forest fires, forest fire protection policies and environmental organizations participation», October 8-12, Vovousa, Pindos National Park, Greece
- Seminar of trans-border collaboration for biodiversity conservation and protected areas management, October 17-18, Dadia, Dadia Forest National Park, Greece
- 20th Pan-Hellenic Ecological Conference, October 24-26, Seres, Greece

Ventzislav Vasilev:

- International round table for trans boundary management of the river Mesta/Nestos, February 28th, Sofia, Bulgaria
- Seminar „Involving of the interested sides in the biodiversity conservation” – May 6-7, Istanbul, Turkey
- Exchange visit to the national parks and meetings with nature conservation NGOs from Central Europe (Hungary, Austria, Slovakia and Serbia) – July 31st – August 5th
- Participation in three coordination meetings with partners from Holland and Denmark about the project „Introducing Nature-friendly farming in Natura 2000”.
- Meeting with representatives of EUCC - The Coastal Union, July 7th, Leiden, Holland
- TAIEX seminar for water management – October 21-24, Plovdiv

Jordanka Dineva:

- Regional conference „Building common European future in environmental issues – Strategy for Development and Action” – June 27th, Beograd, Serbia
- Meeting between the members of CEEweb for Biodiversity and the European Commission – September 15-17, Brussels, Belgium
- Meeting of Natura 2000 Working group of CEEweb for Biodiversity
- Meeting with the Director of Department Protecting the Natural Environment – Mr. Ladislav Miko
- Training from the representatives of Department Criminal procedures” for the Directive

Latinka Topalova – Rzerzycha:

- International conference “The ecosystems of Struma River and Lerkini Lake – a bridge between two nations”, June 5th Litotopos, Greece
- Meeting of the working group from the project “Marketing of a destination for sustainable tourism Belasitza”, July 11th, Bansko, Macedonia
- First session of the Watching committee of the Cross Border Cooperation Programme Greece-Bulgaria 2007-2013 – July 22nd, Thesaloniki, Greece
- Exchange visit to the national parks and meetings with nature conservation NGOs from Central Europe - Serbia (nature reserve Zasavitze), Hungary (national park Fertő-Hanság-Őrség), Austria (national park Neusiedlersee) and Slovakia (national park Slovenian Paradise) – July 31st – August 5th
- Seminar «Forest fires, forest fire protection policies and environmental organizations participation», October 8-12, Vovousa, Pindos National Park, Greece

- International conference "Management of protected areas in Bulgaria and Greece", October 17-18, Sufly, Greece
- Seminar for nature resources conservation, October 29-31, Prosochani, Greece
- Meeting of the working group from the project "Marketing of a destination for sustainable tourism Belasitza", December 15th Strumitza, Macedonia

Rossen Vassilev:

- International workshop under the project *The Marine Area 2 Mai – Durankulak Biodiversity Conservation And Public Awareness*, 30.06-1.07.2008, Constanta, Romania.

The projects developed in 2008

- „Strandja Biosphere reserve” – Norwegian EEA fund - 531 180 euro – approval expected in April 2009;
- „Women helps women” - CEE Trust - 25 000 leva – funding rejected;
- Joint development of sustainable forms of tourism for protection of the biodiversity in the area of Belasitza Nature Park and Kerkini National Park” – PHARE - 185 783 euro – approval expected, to be implemented in partnership with Pirin Tourism forum;
- „To remain nature in Bulgaria” – NGO funds (with support from the European Economic Area (EEA) - 99'890 euro - approved;
- Civil Society for the Nature in Bulgaria (Letter of intend) - CEE Trust - 180 000 USD – rejected;
- Natura 2000 – Threats and Opportunities – Embassy of Netherlands - 29 700 leva. Rejected;
- Future for the Bourgas Wetland Birds (Project of BSPB, BBF is a partner) – LIFE + - budget for BBF : 70 000 euro - approval expected;
- "Travels in the protected world" – Ministry of education - 335'700 leva - approval expected.
- Forestry Academy. Workshop for developing of active civil position for forests and nature conservation in Bulgaria - approval expected

The Structure of the Foundation

BBF is a non-government organization registered in 1997 in public benefit. The Foundation is a member of:

- The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) – www.iucn.org
- Bulgarian association for alternative tourism – www.baatbg.org
- Bulgarian Donors Forum – www.dfbulgaria.org
- CEEweb for Biodiversity - www.ceeweb.org

The BBF Team

In 2008 there are some changes in the team of BBF. The most important was the leave of the Financial Director in the beginning of the year which led to some difficulties in the first 5 months. Since June we hired a new accountant – Mrs. Snejana Ivanova. After the proposal of the Programme Director the salaries of Executive and Programme Directors were reduced with 50%. There were no salaries for the managers of the branches. The costs of the Foundation were reduced. The PR and the manager of Strandja branch is in maternity leave since June and that reflected to the public image of BBF. Unfortunately the idea to share her responsibilities among the team was not successful and the results are obvious. The manager of Belasitza branch Sofia Ilkova will be replaced soon, because of the new job in the Park Directorate. The Manager of Kaliakra Visitor center was replaced with an active and ambitious lady – Elena Urumcheva from Bulgarevo, a former manager of the local Chitaliste.

Rossen Vassilev – Executive Director
Rumyana Ivanova – Programme Director
Snejana Ivanova – Accountant
Radostina Tzenova – PR and manager of Strandja branch (in maternity leave since June)
Stefan Avramov – Biodiversity and Protected species Coordinator, manager of Eastern Rhodope Branch
Petko Tzvetkov – Green Belt and Natura 2000 Coordinator
Jordanka Dineva – Coordinator of the campaign “To remain nature in Bulgaria”
Ventzislav Vasilev – Rivers and river ecosystems Coordinator
Latinka Topalova – Rzerzycha – Coordinator of Belasitza
Sofia Kostadinova-Ilkova – Manager of Belasitza branch
Desislava Jivkova – Office manager
Katerina Angelova – Coordinator Educational activities
Peter Todorov – Coordinator of Osogovo

CONCLUSIONS

2008 will remain in the history with the fact that this is the first year for BBF without Swiss financing. After 15 years of financial and expert support this is an unusual situation for the Foundation and we learned how to walk in the unknown territory.

This reflected the organizational life in different aspects. On one hand the management body of BBF took some administrative and financial re-organizations for independent costs of the organization. On the other hand for the first time the team directed its efforts to many different financial sources. In 2008 the Foundation worked on 35 projects. At first sight this is a positive sign, but it opens again the long-standing dispute for the focus of the foundation and its Strategy. At a certain situation it is extremely important the team and the Board of BBF to agree on the development direction of the organization and to escape from this wide scope, as well as to maintain the foundation itself.

Another positive change is the independent life of the BBF branches. They started to implement both functions for their establishment – to play a role as a local partner, involved in the local politics and to use the financial opportunities from EU funds. In 2008 the 4 branches implemented their own projects and they had ideas for application in 2009.

*Elaborated by: Rumyana Ivanova, Rossen Vassilev
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Sofia, Bulgaria*