

★ SELINA ★

SCIENCE FOR EVIDENCE-BASED
AND SUSTAINABLE DECISIONS
ABOUT NATURAL CAPITAL

Country Fact Sheet **BULGARIA**

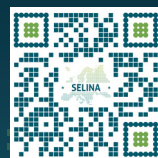


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Country Fact Sheet: Bulgaria (BG)

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NIGGG-BAS

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If you feel there are ongoing or upcoming research projects, policy initiatives or legislations, concerning the use of biodiversity, ecosystem condition and ecosystem services knowledge in decisions and policies, missing please contact inge.liekens@vito.be and we update the country fact sheet (until March 2027)

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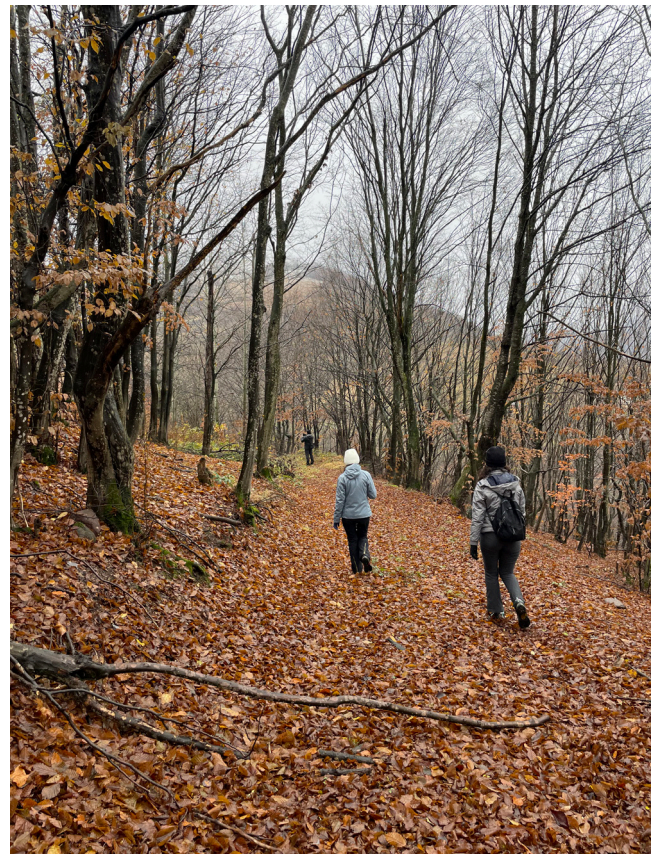
Update on projects concerning biodiversity, ecosystem condition and ecosystem services assessment and accounting since 2022

Bulgaria launched a two-stage program in 2015, with the first stage creating a set of methodologies that were horizontally compatible across ecosystem types, fitted into a standardised database, accommodating for both EU and national classifications and indicator systems in the context of eLTER's (European Long-Term Ecosystem Research) system, and combined both EC and ES assessment. This resulted in an extensive framework with mapping and assessment of nine broad ecosystems emphasizing in situ verification and including a guide for long-term ecosystem condition and services monitoring in line with the MAES framework and the eLTER's Whole System approach (Katrandzhiev et al., 2022).

Since 2022, Bulgaria has been constantly working on different aspects of ecosystem services mapping and assessment in various projects and initiatives. Further mapping and assessment of the ecosystems in Natura 2000 sites is planned to start in 2024, while several studies have already reported geospatial and classification issues within the national database outside Natura 2000 (Petkova et al. 2022), and the possibilities

for further development of indicators in karst areas (Stefanov et al. 2023), and forest ecosystems (Nedkov et al. 2023).

In 2023, the implementation of a significant project aimed at completing the Natura 2000 network in the Bulgarian part of the Black Sea, including data collection and analysis, as well as additional field studies, was completed (BG16M10P002-3.005-0001). The information on the distribution and conservation status of the types of natural habitats and species subject to protection in the marine and coastal Natura 2000 sites under the Habitats Directive has been enriched and improved. Gathered information will improve the efficiency of the management of the sites. Monitoring schemes for the target habitats and species were developed and updated. Proposals for synchronization and optimization of the processes for data collection and reporting under Habitats Directive, WFD and MSFD were made. Through such projects Bulgaria fulfills its commitments in the EU and improves the implementation of the EU Nature Directives.



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Examples of uptake in decision processes, regulations and/or legislation

Bulgaria has officially implemented the ecosystem services concept in legislative documents both on national and regional scale. For instance, nine types of public ecosystem benefits of forest areas and six ecosystem functions were specified in the national Law on Forests. Additionally, a pilot functional zoning of

forests based on the law, was done for the purposes of the management plans in three out of 28 districts in the country (Montana, Smolyan and Dobrich districts). In 2023 the amendment to the Biodiversity Act in Bulgaria was adopted.

3

Perceived barriers and needs to enhance uptake

3.1 Barriers

- Misinformation and slow communication between all parties involved.
- Lack of significant understanding on the importance of environmental issues in general, both in society and decision-makers.
- Lack of funding for activities that are not required by the EU.
- Lack of sufficient human resources.
- Political will.



3.2 Needs

- Continuous communication and knowledge rising at different levels with different stakeholders (i.e. educational activities for students; traditional mass media and social media news for society; stronger relations and dialog between science and policy representatives).





On the way to transformative change

The overall conclusion of the IPBES global assessment (IPBES 2019) was that Goals for conserving and sustainably using nature and achieving sustainability cannot be met by current trajectories, and goals for 2030 and beyond, may only be achieved through transformative changes across economic, social, political, and technological factors.

Transformative or transformational change refers to “a fundamental, system-wide reorganization

across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values” (IPBES, 2019). Simply said, doing things really differently, rather than doing less or optimising the system.

A means to enhance uptake is bringing people of the quadruple helix together and exchange information and learn from each other. Another is to establish projects that can show that it works and lead to possible pathways of transformative change.

4.1 Community of practice

Bulgarian Community of Practice kicked-off in January 2024 at the National Institute of Geophysics, Geodesy and Geography – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (NIGGG-BAS) in Sofia, Bulgaria. A total of 27 participants from diverse sectors, including business (Denkstatt, Coca-Cola HBC), academia (Sofia University, Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research), government (Sofia Municipality, Executive Environment Agency, Executive Forests Agency, Central Balkan National Park, the Bulgarian National Focal Point of IPBES), and civil society, gathered to lay the foundation for the SELINA Community of Practice (CoP) in Bulgaria.

The defined purpose of the Bulgarian CoP is fostering a national connectivity towards collaborative and impactful transformation, where representatives of policy, business, education and science share experience and knowledge. While communication, education and data flow take central part for achieving the purpose, Bulgarian CoP members agreed on the most urgent steps to be taken and further developed.

The Bulgarian Community of Practice succeed to generate several important outcomes for the short time of its existence. Since the kick-off meeting in January 2024, there are groups of outcomes related to communication, events and education activities were recorded:

- Communication-related outcomes include: a shared cloud space for materials related to the CoP, shared list of the membership, registered email for the Community of Practice. Next step on this point is to keep updated.

- Event-related outcomes resulted in a bilateral IPBES Capacity building workshop for Bulgaria and Romania, held in March 2024 in Sofia, Bulgaria, where participants from both SELINA CoPs – Bulgarian and Romanian, had the opportunity to present practices, projects and national frameworks relevant to invasive alien species and transformative change. The workshop itself was organized by the Institute of Biodiversity Network (ibn), Germany with the local support of the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW), and the National Institute of Geophysics, Geodesy and Geography – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (NIGGG-BAS).

- Education-related activities of Bulgarian CoP members were undertaken in late April 2024 during the biggest event for Geography and Earth Sciences in Bulgaria – the Bulgarian Geographical Festival. SELINA and CoP members of the NIGGG-BAS team organized an experimental mapping and assessment of coastal and wetland ecosystems near Burgas city with over 20 secondary school students and their teachers from all over the country. The central outcome of this activity is that a certain group of students and teachers were informed for the importance of the ecosystem services concept and the international science-policy platforms (IPBES) – both still not included in the Bulgarian school educational system and textbooks.

Links

- [Kick-off](#)
- [IPBES workshop](#)



4.2 Seeds of transformative change

Several projects were nominated. Through the online survey SELINA received 3 projects but in the community of practice more projects were discussed.

In the Community of practice a number of projects were discussed:



No	Project/Initiative	Level (0-5)	Discussion group
1	Regulation of ecosystems and ecosystem services in national legislation	5	Public administration
2	Creation of the National Trust EcoFund	5	Public administration
3	Setting ambitious targets by the business (e.g. for 100% collection and recycling of packaging)	5	Public administration
4	The platform Ednodarvo	5	Local government
5	The Bulgarian National Long-term ecosystem research network (LTER-Bulgaria)	5	Science
6	INES project (INtegrated assessment and mapping of water-related Ecosystem Services for nature-based solutions in river basin management)	5	Science
7	Restore4Life project	5	Science
8	Biodiversa+	4	Public administration
9	Coordination Council of Central Balkan Biosphere Reserve	4	Local government
10	Communication	4	Business
11	Mapping and assessment of ecosystem services	4	Business
12	SBTi	4	Business

5

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Project duration: 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2027

Keywords: biodiversity, ecosystems, ecosystem services, natural capital accounting, evidence-based decision-making, transformative change

Project coordinator: Prof. Dr. Benjamin Burkhard, Leibniz University Hannover (LUH), Institute of Physical Geography and Landscape Ecology

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PROJECT PARTNERS

-  Leibniz University Hannover
-  Stichting Capitals Coalition
-  Ecostack Innovations Limited
-  University of Trento
-  Pensoft Publishers
-  Centre for Ecological Research
-  Mykolas Romeris University
-  Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts
-  University of Patras
-  space4environment
-  National Institute of Geophysics, Geodesy and Geography
-  Rey Juan Carlos University
-  University of Salzburg
-  University of Bucharest
-  Flemish Institute for Technological Research
-  Foundation for Sustainable Development
-  Baltic Environmental Forum
-  Adam Mickiewicz University
-  National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and the Environment
-  Copenhagen University
-  Norwegian Institute for Natural Research
-  Estonian University of Life Sciences
-  The Cyprus Institute
-  Wageningen University
-  The Finnish Environment Institute
-  Global Change Research Institute SarVision
-  Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic
-  Gaspar Frutuoso Foundation
-  Flemish Agency for Nature and Forest
-  Municipality of Trento
-  Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania
-  Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia
-  Research Centre in Biodiversity and Genetic Resources
-  University of Haifa
-  COHAB Initiative Secretariat
-  KTH Royal Institute of Technology
-  Croatian Forest Research Institute
-  SEAcop
-  Macroplan
-  University of Reunion Island
-  Spatial Services
-  Asplan Viak
-  denkstatt
-  Wolfs Company, part of Grant Thornton
-  Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge
-  ETH Zürich
-  Joint Research Centre
-  UNEP-WCMC
-  South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute

