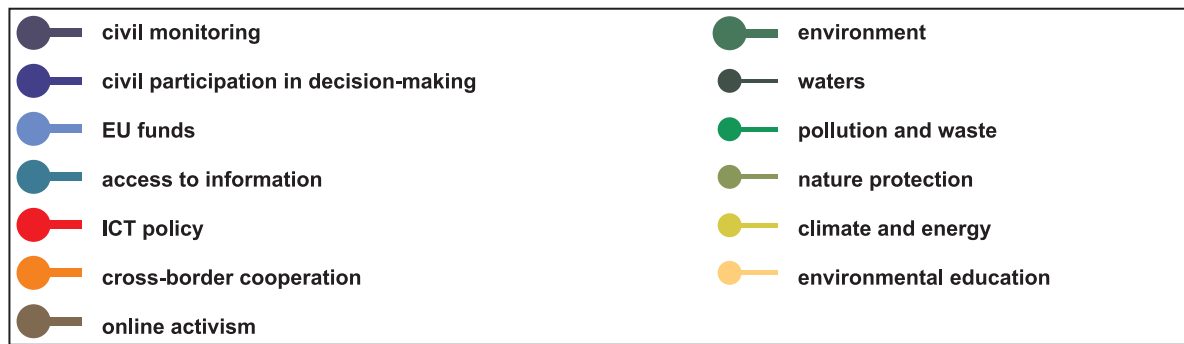
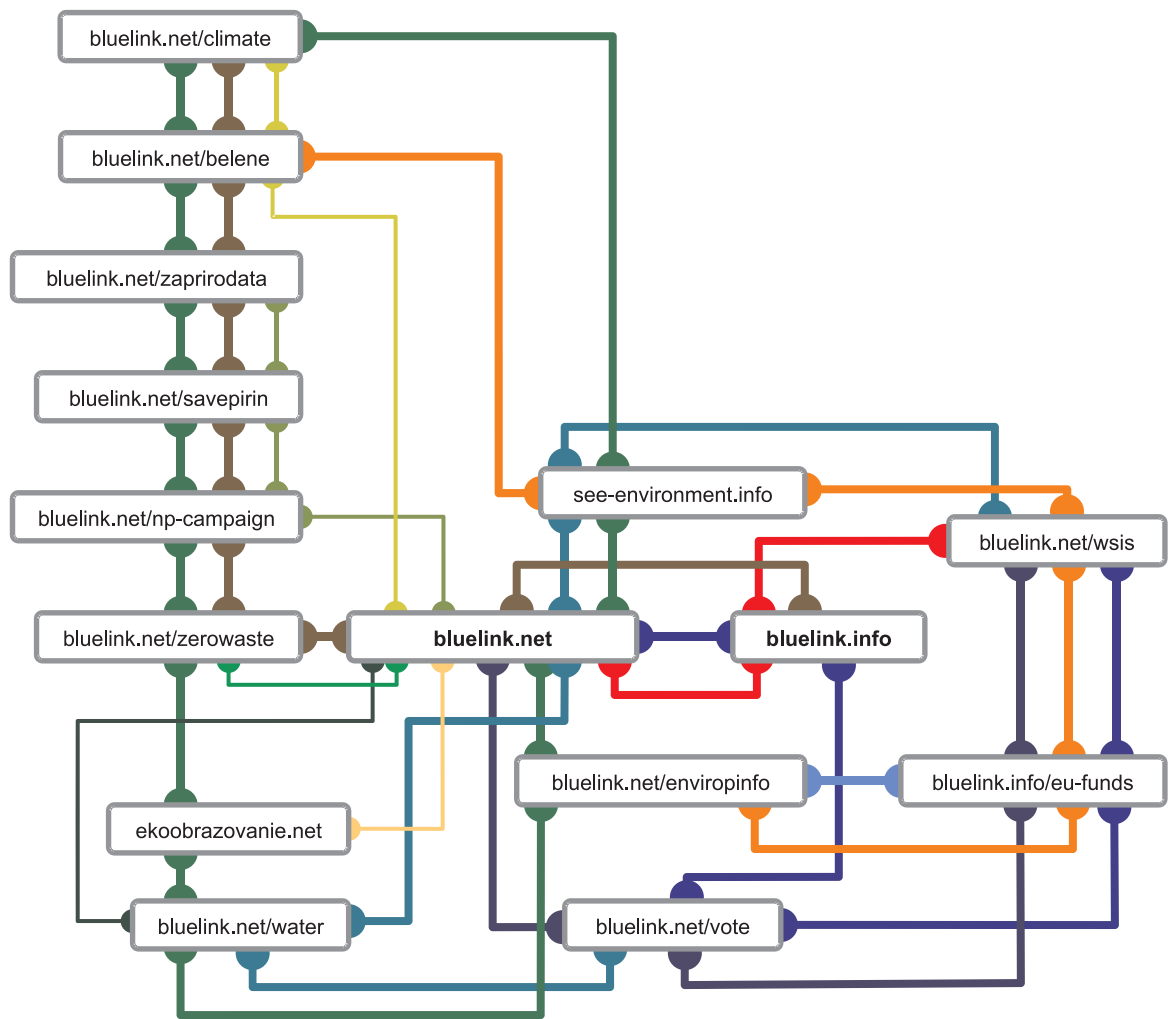


www.bluelink.net



Citizens Empowerment





BLUELINK'S RECENT WEB PROJECTS

Civil Environmental Gateway to Bulgaria
bluelink.net

Civil Society Information Portal
bluelink.info

NGO Election Tool
bluelink.net/vote

Civil Monitoring on EU Funds in Bulgaria
bluelink.info/eu-funds

Bulgarian ICT Policy Monitor
bluelink.net/wsis

Environmental Content Sharing in South East Europe
see-environment.info

Enviropinfo
bluelink.net/enviropinfo

Bulgarian Climate Change Portal
bluelink.net/climate

Waters Database
bluelink.net/water

Zero Waste Campaign
bluelink.net/zerowaste

BeleNE Campaign
bluelink.net/belene

To Preserve Nature in Bulgaria Campaign
bluelink.net/zaprirodata

Legislation FOR the Nature Campaign
bluelink.net/np-campaign

Save Pirin Campaign
bluelink.net/savepirin

Education for Sustainable Development
ekoobrazovanie.net

BlueLink's Executive Board in 2006

Natalia Dimitrova

Chair of the Board

Ilian Iliev

Member of the board

Pavel Antonov

Member of the board

Petko Kovachev

Member of the board

Petko Tsvetkov

Member of the board

BlueLink's Team in 2006

Milena Bokova

Executive Director

Milena Georgieva

Project Manager

Elina Racholova

Content and Communications Manager

Mikhail Bozgounov

Web Designer

Violeta Nikolova

Project Coordinator since September 2006

Venelina Velichkova

Administrative Assistant since November 2006

Marusia Yaneva

Administrative Assistant April – June 2006

Nadya Zlatkova

Administrative Assistant September – November 2006

Tamara Konstantinova

Accountant

Michael Boudreaux

Peace Corps Volunteer

BLUELINK INFORMATION NETWORK ANNUAL REPORT 2006

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Milena Bokova
Executive Director
BlueLink Information Network

There is an old Bulgarian saying that one appreciates what one has, only when one loses it.

If we apply it to the services BlueLink provides to the society and start thinking what the Bulgarian civil society will lose, if suddenly BlueLink disappears. Hundreds of discussion lists, forums and blogs which serve on daily base the communication needs of the society, tens of thematic and campaigning sites, newsletters, on-line collaborative tools that enhance the voice of the citizens to be heard. On-going ICT consultancy and assistance to civil activists. And more, and more...

Imagine all of a sudden all above doesn't exist. No doubt about it this will definitely hamper the work of thousands of activists, civil society groups and organisations.

The services BlueLink provides to the society are penetrated deeply into every day's activities of the sector. Sometimes the users might even not realize how much BlueLink indirectly contributes to achievement of their own goals.

Luckily such an opportunity is hardly to happen, since BlueLink continues to receive the constant help of donors and contributors to enable its services to the society.

This small booklet gathered our achievements in 2006. We are honored to share them with you – our partners, donors, supporters, and users – people who make our work meaningful.

Looking forward to meet you at www.bluelink.net.

BLUELINK CHRONICLES 2006

December 2006

The "ENVIROPINFO" project coordinated by BlueLink kicked-off. It is a NGO twinning project for transferring capacity building from French and Greek NGOs to Bulgarian and Turkish NGOs, funded by the European Commission.

VARNA, BULGARIA – BlueLink took part in the working meeting of the Watchdog team of the North-East (NE) region in the framework of the project for EU Funds monitoring. BlueLink consulted and supported NGO partners from that region in their planning work for future activities.

SOFIA, BULGARIA – BlueLink, together with the State Agency for Information Technology and Communications, conducted a round table on ICT policy and Environmental Sustainability in Sofia. Over 30 experts from state institutions, businesses, NGOs and the media participated at the National consultation on ICT policy in Bulgaria.

VELIKO TURNOVO, BULGARIA – BlueLink lectured at a training workshop presented as part of the EU Funds monitoring project.

November 2006

BLAGOEVRAD, BULGARIA – Targeting Western Bulgaria BlueLink led a workshop titled: Advocacy Capacity Building and Electronic Tools for the Strategic Needs of NGOs. Participants were NGOs, working in the area of gender, youth, volunteers, communities and environment. BlueLink wrote a National Information Society Watch Report, a contribution to an important policy paper managed by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC). The comprehensive document analyzes the implementation and follow-up of key international agreements on ICT policy. APC members from all over the world also gave contribution.

BlueLink started a partnership with the radio network RFI to present environmental case studies.

BlueLink re-registered as organisation acting in public benefit (at the Central Register of Non-Profit Legal Persons at the Ministry of Justice).

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND – BlueLink participated in the Fifth Meeting of the Aarhus Convention Task Force on Electronic Information Tools.

October 2006

SIGHISOARA, ROMANIA – BlueLink participated in an international seminar about NGO involvement in the EU funding process. Participants visited rural, sustainable development projects currently underway in Transylvania.

BlueLink added new section to its website dedicated to Bulgarian waters (www.bluelink.net/water). The new pages describe how access to information and public participation can influence decision-making on water policy in Bulgaria.

VELIKO TURNOVO, BULGARIA – Targeting Eastern Bulgaria, BlueLink organized a workshop on Advocacy, Capacity Building and Electronic Tools for the Strategic Needs of NGOs.

KOROLEV, RUSSIA – BlueLink participated in a networking and training seminar on the EC YOUTH program. BlueLink also had a chance to promote itself at The Youth Forum in Moscow.

ATHENS, GREECE – BlueLink organized a "Greening development through ICT and Civil engagement" workshop sponsored by the APC and UNECE during the Internet Governance Forum. The workshop addressed how communities can harness the immense potential of ICTs in addressing sustainability problems.

September 2006

BlueLink launched an Electronic petition in support of the NGO campaign "To remain nature in Bulgaria" – www.bluelink.net/zaprirodata. Over 15,000 people have sent an e-mail to Bulgarian institutions insisting on immediate measures to stop the destruction of Bulgaria's potential NATURA 2000 areas.

BlueLink restructured and redesigned the Bulgarian ICT Policy Monitor. New dynamic sections on strategic use of ICT, the relation of ICT and youth, development and human rights were added to www.bluelink.net/wsis.

DANUBE DELTA, ROMANIA – BlueLink participated in a training program hosted by the CBN Consortium as part of the project Strengthening Bulgarian and Romanian NGOs. The training covered 4 primary themes: project management, communication and PR, advocacy and lobbying and fundraising.

SOFIA, BULGARIA – On September 22nd BlueLink and its partners Internet Society-Bulgaria and ABC Design& Communication participated in OneWebDay, a global celebration of the Internet.

BLED, SLOVENIA – BlueLink made a presentation on BlueLink activities and the NGO online voting platform at the TRUST-NET-IN-ACTION conference. TRUSTNET is a European pluralistic think tank, focused on developing, refining and influencing governance of hazardous activities and their impact on public health and the environment.

August 2006

BlueLink presented the NGO Election Tool to officials of the Ministry of State Policy on Disasters and Accidents.

VARNA, BULGARIA – BlueLink conducted a capacity building seminar for NGO watchdog teams from several Bulgarian regions monitoring EU Funds implementation.

July 2006

BlueLink upgraded the "Legislation FOR Nature" campaign site (www.bluelink.net/np-campaign). A new electronic petition was launched to support NGO action to affect positive changes in the Protected Areas Act.

The Sofia City Court re-registered BlueLink as an organization acting in public benefit.

June 2006

WEIMAR, GERMANY – BlueLink participated at the Mission Europe conference where she made a presentation about the environmental movement in Bulgaria.

SOFIA, BULGARIA – Open Society Institute organized a presentation of the methodology and the results of the Monitoring of Sofia Municipal Council project for international NGO representatives in Sofia. BlueLink presented the results of the environmental protection monitoring.

LONDON, UK – BlueLink participated in the ICT Policy Workshop organized by APC. The workshop attracted participants from the APC network of national ICT policy portals and focused on researching and writing about the main issues and trends in ICT policy at a national level.

May 2006

GORNA BANYA, BULGARIA – The annual meeting of BlueLink's founders was held on May 13th. BlueLink's activity report for 2005 was accepted and the activity plan for 2006 was discussed and endorsed. The founders made the decision to reregister BlueLink as organization acting in public benefit.

BlueLink designed and distributed a web-version of the "Eco-Citizenship Newsletter" of the project "Eco-citizenship in the Euro-Mediterranean space", led by the French Non Governmental Organization CME (Centre Mediterranean de l'Environnement). BlueLink also deployed online open form where users can post news on the collaborative content sharing web platform for South Eastern Europe (www.see-environment.info). It is now possible for organizations from Turkey and Greece to publish information on the site.

IZMIR, TURKEY – An Eco-citizenship network meeting was held, where BlueLink presented ideas for online communication between NGOs from different countries.

April 2006

BlueLink launched the site: Education for Sustainable Development (www.ekoobrazovanie.net). Work was commissioned by TIME Foundation and Borrowed Nature Association. The site is dedicated to sustainable development and environmental education in Bulgaria.

BlueLink designed a campaign site for the Zero Waste coalition (www.bluelink.net/zero-waste) intended to disseminate information about the Sofia waste problem and the introduction of zero-waste strategies. The site aims to foster advocacy efforts for the reform of municipal waste management policies.

BlueLink upgraded and redesigned the BeleNE Coalition campaign site: www.bluelink.net/belene. The Coalition is made up of NGOs working against nuclear revival in Bulgaria. BlueLink created a compelling new design, dynamic sections, and a great deal of new content.

BlueLink hosted members of the Eco-family coalition to discuss and elaborate a joint advocacy and campaigning project in the field of nature protection.

SOFIA, BULGARIA – BlueLink participated in a discussion on free and open source software for NGOs in Bulgaria, organized by the Media Art Center Interspace.

March 2006

UZANA, BULGARIA – BlueLink participated in the Eco-citizenship seminar, establishing a network between environmental NGOs from Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey and France.

BlueLink launched a website for the NGO coalition monitoring the sustainable use of EU funds (www.bluelink.info/eu-funds). The site contains information about the Structural and Cohesion funds, EU operational programs for Bulgaria, thematic news, documents and useful links.

February 2006

BURGAS, BULGARIA – BlueLink co-facilitated a workshop with Open Society Institute about advocacy and lobbying for environmental and social NGOs as part of our joint project "Strategy for consolidation of the sustainability of the NGO sector in Bulgaria".

BlueLink took part in the discussions about the elaboration of a law for volunteers in Bulgaria initiated by Bulgarian Center for Non-Profit Law.

January 2006

BlueLink opened its doors for New Bulgarian University students in Ecology. The staff introduced them to environmental civil society work to protect nature.

GORNA BANIA, BULGARIA – BlueLink, together with its Dutch partner Milieukontakt, conducted an international seminar for civil monitoring of EU Funds implementation.



<TAG CLOUD>: **petition**, **NATURA 2000**, cyber activism, **environmentalists' demands**, **alert**, **destructive projects**, **on-line tool**, saving nature, **campaign site**, environmental legislation, **environmental education**, on-line submission form, **exchange of practices**, subscribe



Bulgarian students protest in Karlsruhe, Germany in favor of Natura2000 implementation in Bulgaria



Demonstration in Amsterdam, The Netherlands for protecting Bulgarian nature

Environmental petition mobilizes 15 000 activists

5 days = 5000 signatures on-line to uphold the Bulgarian nature intact

URL: www.bluelink.net/zaprirodata

People from Kazanluk (a town in the beautiful Bulgarian Rose Valley) to Karlsruhe (Germany) are the first to support the petition of the campaign "To preserve nature in Bulgaria", initiated by a number of Bulgarian environmental NGOs and reproduced on the net by BlueLink.

This message, wired by the Bulgarian telegraph agency, during the OneWebDay (22 September) was meant to illustrate the impact of Internet in human life and public actions.

BlueLink launched the virtual counterpart of the environmental campaign on 17th of September 2006 and in 5 days the initiative managed to sweep significant support. More than 5000 on-line signatures backed the environmentalists' demands. The online tool was designed to send a carefully crafted message to Bulgarian authorities on behalf of the signers, appealing for legislation amendments and strong law enforcement to stop booming illegal constructions in protected areas and

destructive projects in NATURA 2000 sites.

"This achievement of getting engaged on-line so many people in such short term makes the campaign the fastest growing petition in BlueLink's experience of cyber activism", comments Elina Racholova, BlueLink's editor.

Later on the number of protesters grew to 15 000 people, all sending the alert to the Bulgarian institutions for rapid and effective measures to save nature and prevent the loss of the country's natural resources.

The campaign site also contained information on potential threats to the protected areas and planned NATURA 2000 sites, case studies on outrageous violations of the laws and harmful projects in the Bulgarian mountains, wetlands and Black Sea coast. In addition to that users could subscribe to alert emails on upcoming environmentalists' actions, respond to polls on nature protection issues, sign up for volunteers or donate money.

NATURA 2000 is an ecological network in the territory of the European Union, where each EU Member State must submit a list of its best wildlife areas. These sites became part of the European nature heritage and benefit from their special status of protection by the EU community.

Legislation FOR the Nature Campaign v.2.0 *Protected Areas Still Need Protection*

URL: www.bluelink.net/np-campaign

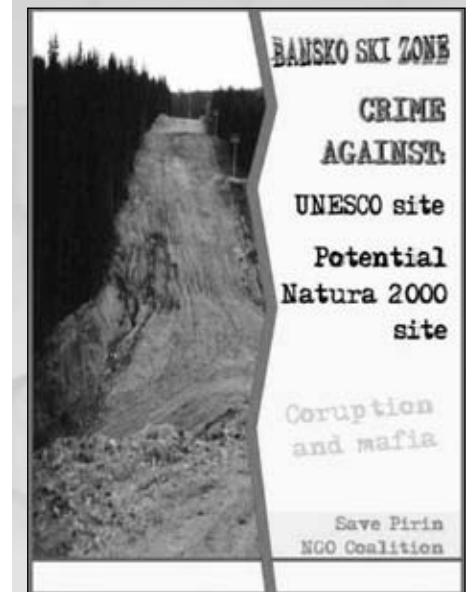
At the request of the coalition, BlueLink developed a new website which included a new electronic petition drive allowing activists to voice opposition to their representatives about weakening environmental protection laws.

The "Legislation FOR the Nature" campaign claimed significant success. With the help of the website and petition, a campaign-advocated bill was approved, strengthening the Law for Environmental Protection while two bills unfriendly to biodiversity and protected areas were defeated.



In 2006, the Bulgarian Park Association spearheaded the effort to revitalize the "Legislation FOR the Nature" campaign. Building on the successful 2005 campaign, the new effort of a wide NGO Coalition also sought to increase the participation, transparency and sustainability of environmental legislative processes.

Critical report on destructive Bulgarian ski development was uploaded on Save Pirin Campaign website covering recent violations of nature protection regulations at the National park. The document "Bansko Ski Zone – a Crime without Punishment" was prepared by the NGO coalition "Save Pirin" and is available for download and online reviewing on BlueLink's Pirin National Park website bluelink.net/savepirin



Numerous civil actions needed on-line assistance in 2006 and therefore BlueLink managed to host dozens of mailing lists that facilitated shared activism work on variety of topics: from NATURA 2000 sites protection to the resistance of cyanide use in gold extraction in Bulgaria, from donors' support to civil coalition building.

Environmental education in Bulgaria goes on-line

URL: www.ekoobrazovanie.net

Education for Sustainable Development site was released by BlueLink in April 2006. Work was commissioned by TIME Foundation and Borrowed Nature Association, which specialized in this area of environmental awareness, and was meant to deliver the results and the experience from their work.

The site dedicated to sustainable development and environmental education in Bulgaria provided materials for students and teachers as well as opportunities to exchange teaching practices. A submission form for teachers to share their experience was designed on the site. Additionally users were able also to subscribe to a mailing list and to join discussions on the topic.



<TAG CLOUD>: re-design, anti-nuclear, on-line spot, **BeleNE**, new content, second NPP, web-gallery, advocacy on-line, **waste management**, information dissemination, mailing list



20th anniversary of the Chernobyl incident, a night vigil dedicated to the memory of the victims



Demonstration against construction of NPP Belene in Tuzla, Bosnia & Herzegovina

Anti-nuclear site gets new wrapper

Additional features are available after the re-design of the campaign site of the BeleNE Coalition

URL: www.bluelink.net/belene

The site dedicated to the work of the BeleNE Antinuclear Coalition was born in the spring of 2004.

It was launched after only few days of development work in respond of urgent needs of the coalition members for an on-line spot where to criticize the corrupted data in the Environmental Impact Assessment Survey for the construction

of a second nuclear power plant (NPP) in Bulgaria.

Two years later the struggle against the nuclear revival in the country was still continuing and its web-based environment received a new wrap. BlueLink upgraded and redesigned the BeleNE campaign site.

A compelling new design was created, dynamic sections, take away banners for

the campaign supporters and a great deal of new content.

A special mention deserves the brand new web-gallery of the site, where photos from latest actions and rallies were uploaded. The section turned out to be the most vivid and popular part of the site, a visual chronicle of the events and a source of inspiration for future activists' moves.

The campaign against the constructing of Belene NPP is organized by environmental and other non-governmental organizations and Bulgarian citizens.



"I cannot imagine the work of the BeleNE coalition without using the web. First we need the website to disseminate more information on our activities, then the success of the actions and the whole campaign against a second NPP in Bulgaria depends on the quick communication between the coalition members and our supporters home and abroad. If we don't use Internet tools, our campaign activities almost freeze. Having BlueLink to maintain our site an mailing lists is of great help", says Denitsa Petrova from the BeleNE coalition.

Sustainable Waste Management Campaign

When a zero equals benefits

URL: www.bluelink.net/zerowaste

With current landfills nearing capacity BlueLink is supporting a NGO coalition which encourages an environmentally friendly waste management regime. The "Zero Waste" campaign not only works to discourage toxic waste disposal such as incineration, it also seeks to tackle waste much earlier in the consumption process.

The initiative encourages community practices such as recycling and composting and seeks to reduce waste volume and toxicity through smarter packaging design and number of additional measures.

In 2006 BlueLink designed, and continues to manage, a website for the Zero Waste coalition intended to foster advocacy efforts and information exchange between NGOs and location initiative committees working to implement environmentally sensible and sustainable solution to the waste problem in Sofia. The site easily became an active electronic environment for information dissemination on the topic.

The image shows a screenshot of the website for the 'Zero Waste' campaign. The website has a header with the title 'кампания нулеви-отпадъци' (Zero Waste Campaign) and a navigation menu. The main content area includes sections like 'начало', 'проблемът с отпадъците', 'како значи "нулеви отпадъци"', 'кой е отговорен', 'пунктите намеря', 'практически стъпки', 'за пример', 'за кампанията', 'как да ви помогнем', 'както ново', 'документи', 'мнения', 'форум', 'галерия', 'полезни връзки', and 'слони банер'. Below the website screenshot is a black and white photograph of a group of people protesting on a street, holding signs and banners.

Sofia citizens on the streets protesting against incinerators building in Bulgaria

BlueLink also hosted a mailing list on Zero waste, where the members of the NGO coalition lead heated discussions on the problem. According to the statistics this list became the fastest growing amid the lists we support and its quantity dynamics made it an important communication channel for civil actions.

Additional benefit from the Zero waste campaign was when the Sofia Municipality expressed interest to BlueLink for electing NGO representatives to participate in the city's waste crisis solution seeking. Attracting a municipality to recognize the civil participation process BlueLink is advocating for was a precedent and a successful step in the NGO elections wide endorsement.



"Bluelink has backed up the campaign with an e-mail listserv and a web-site. Its staff regularly updates it and provides all the technical support needed. I believe we will go on working together in even greater cooperation as Sofia citizens will have to recognize the Zero Waste web-site as the greatest source for information on waste", says Ivailo Hlebarov from Environmental Association Za Zemiata (For the Earth).

MINI BLOG

New section to BlueLink's website dedicated to Bulgarian waters (www.bluelink.net/water) was added. The new pages describe how access to information and public participation can influence decision-making on water policy in Bulgaria.

To find out more about the issue, users can download detailed information and presentations from the site. The new site content was created to support the environmental organization "Ecomission21", from Lovech, Bulgaria.

Climate change, renewables and energy efficiency press-clipping was started in 2006. BlueLink made the service available on demand and managed to produce over 30 weekly press-reviews.

Articles from major Bulgarian newspapers and information from the Bulgarian Ministry of environment and waters were monitored and summarized on daily basis. General politics of Bulgaria towards Kyoto-protocol, figures of greenhouse gas emissions, emission trading and the development of the National allocation plan were featured. The service was available in English.

BlueLink's Bulgarian climate change portal also continued to grow during the year.

<TAG CLOUD>: **election platform, civil representatives, voting tool, state institutions, NGO election procedure, training workshops, advocacy skills, strategic use of Internet, collaborative portals, information sharing**

The NGO Election Tool marks another year of success

7 new voting rounds brought civil representatives into official institutions

URL: www.bluelink.net/vote

In an effort to expand the scope and breadth of the NGO elections platform BlueLink continued to seek out opportunities for updating the voting tools and procedures of the platform, as well as increased the online voting participation into additional state and NGO sectors.

The platform experienced major growth in 2006 with the success of 7 new elections and update of the list of NGO representatives participating in the voting platform. Outreach activities aimed at promotion of the platform were performed and invitation for collaboration was sent to a variety of institutions. Success in expanding the scope of members was evident when the Sofia Municipality also took advantage of the NGO election procedure and had a civil representative elected via the online voting platform.

As BlueLink continues to upgrade the capacity of the election e-tools and support the deployment of the online voting platform into other sectors, it has also identified the need to revise the election procedure. This revision requires a mandatory National NGO conference, which BlueLink has begun to initiate dialogue for.

The election procedure was accepted by the National Conference of the NGOs working for environmental protection and sustainable development, Sofia 2002. The e-platform is a legitimate instrument and applies all the rules of the procedure. The NGO election tool is also applicable for NGO sectors and institutions other than environmental. BlueLink is actively working to extend the platform's user group. The online election system allows registered NGO users to nominate a candidate, to vote and communicate with representatives.

Civil Society Portals – crafty instrument for disseminating information of Third sector's activities

URLs: www.bluelink.net
www.bluelink.info

During 2006 BlueLink increased its ability in becoming a convenient, easy-to-use and dynamic tool for rapid dissemination and updating of information. Such provisions directly enhanced the opportunity for active communication on the Third sector activities.

The Civil Environmental Gateway to Bulgaria

(bluelink.net)

measured its development, usage and benefit in various indicators. Over 600 articles were published and over 1800 daily visits were scored (up nearly 100% increase since last year).

Topics as pollution and waste, nature conservation, climate change and energy remained one of the hottest in number of published articles from NGO authors.

Stories on access to environmental information and eco-education, waters management and deforestation, genetically-modified organisms and biofoods, and destruction in protected areas also challenged readers' interest. The portal actively contributes to the daily stream of information as a reliable source on environmentally-related topics.



Civil Environmental Gateway to Bulgaria portal site: www.bluelink.net



Civil Society Information Portal in Bulgaria: www.bluelink.info

The ongoing process to rebuild the bluelink.net site activities speeded up at the end of 2006.

The activities conducted included:

- Announcing developer recruitment;
- Technical assignment was developed and started being implemented;
- Improved search engine;
- Test development and installing of a blog system;
- and Research on possible backup options.

The Civil Society Information Portal

(bluelink.info)

continues to develop in a steady trend and to serve organizations not only on the environmental field, but also to the ones involved with community development, volunteering, women's rights, youth collaboration, etc.

The portal enhances information sharing and collaboration within these civil groups.

Workshops and education manuals improve NGOs' communication and advocacy skills

BlueLink has continued to advance its mission of raising awareness, education and capacity within the NGO and public sectors. Through its training activities organizations are provided with an opportunity to become better informed, knowledge empowered and equipped with the necessary tools for civil actions.

Two training workshops were organized in Veliko Tarnovo and Blagoevgrad on Advocacy, Capacity Building and Electronic Tools for the Strategic Needs of NGOs. Participants were NGO members, working in the area of gender, youth, volunteers, communities and environment. Founding organizations of BlueLink were local hosts of the events – Academica GeoEcoClub from Veliko Tarnovo and Environmental Youth Club Terra from Blagoevgrad. A workshop was also conducted in Burgas for environmental NGOs within a joined project on Strategy for sustainability of the civil sector in Bulgaria.

BlueLink's workshops are designed to increase the knowledge and practical skills of NGOs on public policies development; on the structure and mechanisms of functioning of public institutions and local government; to develop skills for effective dialogue with national and local institutions; skills for impacting public opinion; and to enhance NGOs' capacity on harnessing ICTs for strategic use. As ICTs were always



Training workshop in Veliko Tarnovo

a special focus in BlueLink's work, the trainings showed ways of strategic electronic networking and cooperation by focusing on collaborative e-discussion tools and web publishing applications, e-platforms for advocacy and public participation.

New training modules were developed to sustain the capacity building efforts and to serve organizations in their daily work. The following topics were covered in separate manuals: Working with the media, On-line campaigning, Civic journalism, NGOs' participation in ICT policy development, Access to information, participation in the decision making and access to justice on environmental issues, NGO elections process and on-line voting.

MINI BLOG

BlueLink hosted several meetings of the members of the Eco-family coalition to elaborate a joint advocacy initiative in the field of nature protection. The unified efforts resulted in "To remain nature in Bulgaria" campaign. The environmental NGO family was built in 2005 when BlueLink initiated the consolidation towards common strategic goals and advocacy models.

Banner rotation started on BlueLink's main portal bluelink.net to assist presentation of major environmental and NGO websites. The software installed tracks banner impressions and click-rates.

The number of supported mailing lists hit the number of 64. The discussion lists continued to be the most effective of the traditional instruments from BlueLink's equipment for efficient NGO work on-line.

Present environmental case studies went on air when BlueLink started a partnership with the radio network Radio France International (RFI). The broadcast began with the presentation of BlueLink's activities and recent campaigns. Later BlueLink assisted RFI to allocate speakers to participate in the broadcasting of various environmental themes.

<TAG CLOUD>: monitoring committees, EU Structural and Cohesion Funds, transparency, sustainable development, EU operative programs, collaborative content sharing, common web-platform, environmental policy and programs, knowledge transfer

Local watchdog teams monitor European funds implementation on regional level

BlueLink assembled teams to enhance citizens participation on EU Funds planning

URL: www.bluelink.info/eu-funds



In 2006 BlueLink teamed up with Bulgarian and Romanian NGOs and stated an initiative for Public participation in sustainable regional development in EU-accession countries. BlueLink assisted a group of organizations from Central North and East North Planning regions in forming monitoring committees (watch dog teams) to take care of the implementation of the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds in Bulgaria. Numerous trainings for capacity building of the involved NGOs were conducted during the year to help them better understand the principles of sustainable development and to acquire new skills in lobbying for citizens participation in decision making on EU Funds planning and implementation.

On 24–27 August BlueLink conducted a capacity building seminar for the watchdog teams in Varna. During the seminar, NGOs learned about the current status of the EU funds planning process on national level. BlueLink lectured also in Veliko Turnovo at a second workshop (14–15 December) on the EU Funds monitoring. Watchdog teams were also trained on topics such as sustainable development.

The project is an example of partnership with local NGOs – the coordinator in Central North region is Earth Forever from Svishtov and in the East North region – Public Environmental Center for Sustainable Development from Varna. The initiative involves around 10 local NGOs in

each region which form the watch dog teams. These teams monitor regional authorities on the implementation of the EU Funds and lobby for their transparency and sustainable utilization on local level.

On national level an NGO coalition of over 30 members works for sustainable use of EU Funds. Some of its members were involved in the working groups for developing the plans and operative programs for EU Funds implementation in Bulgaria.

Exchange of experience and knowledge among partners from Romania and Bulgaria on EU Funds themes also happened during several cross-border workshops. The first one took place on 20–23 January 2006 in Gorna Bania when BlueLink, together with the Dutch partner in the initiative Milieukontakt International, conducted an international seminar for civil monitoring of EU Funds implementation. On 1–3 October in Sighisoara, Romania, BlueLink participated in a second seminar led by the Romanian partners of the initiative Focus Eco Center.

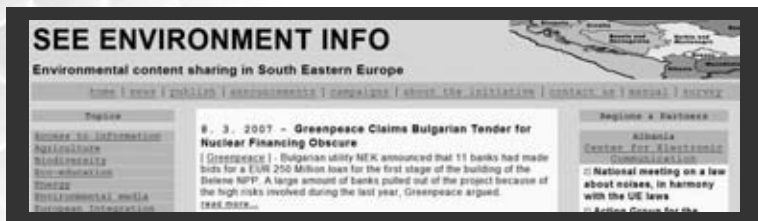
BlueLink created a special web site www.bluelink.info/eu-funds to assist the work on regional but also on national level. On the web site one can find info about all operative programs and EU Funds. There is a daily feed with news, documents and other useful information.



Seminar for the watchdog teams in Varna

Eco-citizenship brings together environmental activists

URL: www.see-environment.info



BlueLink fulfilled the task to empower the communication among Bulgarian, Greek and Turkish NGOs by joining the initiative for eco-citizenship network in the Euro-Mediterranean space. A web-version of the "Eco-Citizenship Newsletter" of the initiative, led by the French NGO Centre Mediterranean de l'Environnement, was designed and distributed. A special discussion list was created for all eco-citizenship participants, where they are able to dis-

cuss issues, share information, asking for support, develop joint statements, look for partners, etc.

BlueLink also deployed online open form where users can post news on the collaborative content sharing web platform for South Eastern Europe (www.see-environment.info). It is now possible for organizations from Turkey and Greece to publish information on the site. News, events and

campaigns with environmental content may now be available on the common web-platform.

During a meeting in Izmir, Turkey, BlueLink made a special presentation before all partners on the new e-tools developed by the initiative and encouraged them to take the advantage of sharing their local information on international level.



Twinning initiative educates on EU environmental policy

URL: www.bluelink.net/enviropinfo

At the end of 2006 the ENVIROPINFO initiative coordinated by BlueLink kicked-off. It is a NGO twinning project for transferring capacity building from French and Greek NGOs to Bulgarian and Turkish NGOs, funded by the European Commission.

"The partners met in the Eco-citizenship network. From their exchange of experience, they came to the conclusion, that

Environmental NGOs had a role to play in disseminating information on EU Environmental Policy and programs. NGOs from future EU members states have still to improve their skills, capacity building and means to play this role and become an actor of the EU Governance", said Milena Bokova, BlueLink's Executive Director.

In this context, BlueLink (Bulgaria) and TUCEV (Turkey), having both an important

network in their country and a mission to inform and support environmental actors, proposed to Enviropea (France) and the Mediterranean Center of Environment (Greece) to transfer their experience and knowledge on EU Environmental policy. Skill building workshops, led by the EU partners, development of electronic communication tools and creation of a correspondents' network for ENVIROPINFO are among the intended objectives of the partnership.

BLUELINK ABROAD

The efforts of the environmental movement in Bulgaria were presented at The Mission Europe conference (23-25 June) in Weimar, Germany, where BlueLink's executive director Milena Bokova spoke.

BlueLink participated in a training program by the CBN Consortium as part of the project Strengthening Bulgarian and Romanian NGOs. The training on the Danube delta (12 - 17 September), included the themes: project management, communication and PR, advocacy and lobbying, fundraising.

BlueLink's NGO online voting platform was promoted at the TRUSTNET-IN-ACTION conference held in Bled, Slovenia (19-23 September). TRUSTNET is a European pluralistic think tank, focused on influencing governance of hazardous activities and their impact on public health and the environment.

In Russia BlueLink participated in a networking seminar on the EC YOUTH program, held in Korolev (24-27 October). It was part of the CEE YouthNet project organized by Interkulturelles Zentrum, Austria. On the 28-29th, BlueLink promoted itself at The Youth Forum in Moscow, organized by NEW EURASIA foundation.

<TAG CLOUD>: information society, importance of the ICT, policy development, civil involvement, ICT and environment, accessible Internet, freedom of speech

Debating over Third sector's involvement in ICT policy decision making in Bulgaria

The National consultation held by BlueLink drafted recommendations for improved multi-stakeholder participation.



Over 30 experts from state institutions, businesses, NGOs and the media participated at the National consultation on ICT policy in Bulgaria. The consultation took place in Sofia on December 13th 2006 and was organized by BlueLink with the assistance of the State Agency for Information Technology and Communications (SAITC).

The participants discussed the means and incentives for collaboration and multi-stakeholders' participation in the decision-making process on ICT policy in Bulgaria and drafted recommendations on future proceeding.

According to the attendants of the meeting, the national debate over the information society has slackened. ICTs

are not adequately presented in the operational programs of the state administration. Lack of understanding of the importance of the ICT policy impedes the ICT penetration in various public and economic areas.

The state's inclusion of NGOs in the ICT policy forging process is still lagging, participants point out. Yet positive trends are apparent in several levels of the state administration. Another conclusion of the consultation was that the chain breaks down on the political level when bills are consulted within the parties.

The integration of the environmental sustainability in ICT policy was a special focus during the meeting. Currently, the National Strategy on ICT policy in Bulgaria does not cover issues related to the environment and sustainable development, SAITC reported. But its delayed endorsement opens an opportunity to add this omitted topic, SAITC representatives explained.

Based on the outcomes of the discussions, draft recommendations were outlined by the participants of the National consultation. They suggested the proposed activities to be included in future ICT policy development, civil society participation in the decision-making, and the integration of environmental sustainability into ICT policy strategic documents. The consultation also recommended improved integration of the ICT element in environmental strategies.

BlueLink joined OneWebDay celebrations

OneWebDay (www.onewebday.org), the first world day for celebrating how the Internet impacts our lives was marked in Bulgaria on 22 September both on-line and off-line. Stories were shared on www.isoc.bg/onewebday and a live discussion took place in Sofia about how the Internet changes the society in Bulgaria.

"The Internet has become an omnipresent power in our lives. We should not take the Internet for granted and should do everything we can to make it more easily accessible for the people in the world.", says Susan Crawford, an Associate Professor at the Cardoso Law School and OneWebDay initiator.

Internet Society Bulgaria, Bulgarian Web Association and BlueLink Information Network joined together for the first OneWebDay celebration in Bulgaria. For BlueLink, as an information network of organizations working in the environmental sphere, it is important that OneWebDay was inspired by a similar day – the Day of the Earth.

"Web activism in Bulgaria supports the development of Bulgarian civil society, including the environmental movement. Within hours coalitions are established by organizations supporting a cause, on-line petitions are organized, and with the appearance of on-line media the freedom of speech reached new limits", says Elina Racholova, BlueLink's team member.

BlueLink participated in the Fifth Meeting of the Aarhus Convention Task Force on Electronic Information Tools

During this session the Task force used a questionnaire to assess the Aarhus Convention implementation, discussed the Aarhus Clearinghouse Mechanism development and Guidance for the national nodes.

At the meeting in Geneva (23–24 November) BlueLink also presented the NGO Election Platform and the online petition within the campaign "To preserve nature in Bulgaria".

BlueLink also brought out the results of its participation in the Internet Governance Forum and the workshop "Greening Development through ICT and Civic Engagement", organized together with APC.

In 1998 the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe adopted the Aarhus Convention in the Danish city of Aarhus.

The convention has since become an indispensable tool for environmental organizations in Europe and its three pillars of access to information, public participation and access to justice make it a critical focal point for BlueLink.

The Task Force on Electronic Information Tools exists since 2003 and BlueLink regularly participates in its meetings from the very beginning.

Information Technology Tools for Environment

In the period September–December 2006, and with the active support and coaching from APC on-line resource center team, BlueLink elaborated a Training Handout entitled *Information Technology Tools for the Environment*.

The Handout contained two main sections. The first section provided most popular definitions of e-Government, e-Democracy and e-Networks and explained the public and institutional benefits from applying those concepts in reality. Some of those benefits include: reduction of time, efforts and price for usage of administrative services by citizens and businesses, as well as for an access to public information; improved government decisions; increased citizen trust in government and government accountability and transparency; effective involvement of stakeholders, including NGOs, business, and interested citizens in new ways of meeting important societal objectives; greater and more active citizen participation by means of Internet, mobile communications, and other technologies in social and political life. In addition, the first section gave an overview of the most popular ICT tools used by e-Networks and communities and key lessons learnt in designing new electronic services for the civil society.

The second section gave an overview of the historic development and key concepts behind the Aarhus Convention on public participation in environmental decision-making. The so-called three "pillars" of the convention, namely – access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making and access to justice regarding environmental matters – were explored in detail, and the ensuing responsibilities for authorities explained.

This chapter also reviewed the role and use of ICT in facilitating the implementation of the Convention

The Handout concluded with three selected case-studies from Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria which demonstrated best practices in the use of ICT by NGOs and community groups for improving the internet access to environmental information.

Bulgarian ICT Policy Portal continues to develop

URL: www.bluelink.net/ws

BlueLink restructured and redesigned the Bulgarian ICT Policy Monitor web-site. Expanded functionality and a refreshed look are the new features. Sections with comprehensive information on the following topics were added: "What's ICT policy?", "Strategic Use of ICT", "ICT Policy Glossary", "Youth&ICT", "ICT for Development", "ICT&Human Rights".

Comments and press-clip features enriched the existing news section. Most of the newly added categories are available both in Bulgarian and English.

BlueLink also participated in the ICT Policy Workshop held in London (28 June – 2 July) organized by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC). The workshop attracted participants from the APC network of national ICT policy portals and focused on understanding, researching and writing about the main issues and trends in ICT policy at a national level. It was also a starting point in forging a common editorial policy for the portals' content.

<TAG CLOUD>: **Internet Governance**, environmental sustainability, APC, UNECE, IGF, ICT for development, public access to information, regulatory framework

Greening Internet Governance

BlueLink organized a workshop on Greening Development through ICT and Civic Engagement during the first Internet Governance Forum



Greening Development through ICT and Civic Engagement' workshop at the IGF in Athens

The first Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was called by UN's Secretary General in November to guide the development of Internet, following upon the World Summit on the Information Society (2003 – 2005).

Among hundreds of other issues,

**environment protection
made its way to
the discussion**

in Athens. Greening Development through ICT and Civic Engagement was the title of a workshop, held as part of the IGF in the Greek capital.

BlueLink – the electronic environmental NGOs' network in Bulgaria, and the global Association for Progressive

Communications (APC) held the workshop, in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

The workshop's ambition was to identify synergies in policy and technical solutions that would bridge Internet Governance with environmental sustainability.

"There is definitely a link between the Internet development and the environmental protection. From one side Internet is an industry and as such makes an impact on the environment and human health and in this regard should be regulated in order to reflect on sustainable development principles.

From the other side Internet is an

**irreplaceable tool for
the efforts of people
to protect the environment**

and human health and in this regard should be accessible for all", said BlueLink's executive director Milena Bokova.

How thick is actually the connection between the governance of the internet and environment protection indeed? To many in the IT industry dealing with electronic waste and energy consumption is the only environmental issue worth talking about – so policies are needed regulating that.

But there is much more to it, according to Hans Hansel, a trade policy adviser at UNECE and leader of its ICT group for development.

The immense potential of the Internet and ICTs to facilitate improvements of environment and sustainable use of nature's resources creates a vast area for policy synergies, said Hansel. This potential needs to be realized and reflected in the further Internet Governance developments.

At the same time ICT policies need to be integrated into legislative and regulatory frameworks, the workshop suggested. These would include:

- decreasing emissions of harmful substances in the environment;
- public access to information regarding environment and human health;
- transparency and good governance regarding environmental issues;
- equitable distribution of resources;
- corporate responsibility and fair trade;
- and all other policy fields related to environmentally sustainable development.

Probably the most exiting finding in Athens was the striking parallel between the guiding principles of Internet Governance and the principles employed by environmental sustainability policy instruments.

The UNECE's Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters is a fresh example for this.

The principle of subsidiary in decision making which is inherent for sustainable development policies is particularly relevant for Internet Governance and ICT policies, said Michael Stanley-Jones, of the convention's secretariat. Other common principles between internet governance and the Aarhus convention include multi-stakeholder involvement and broad public participation in international fora, Stanley-Jones said.

Creating a regulatory framework that obliges governments and the business

to maintain electronically environmental databases and proactively share information

with the public by means of telecommunications networks is another potential direction of IT policies that has already been tried by the Aarhus Convention and its protocol on Pollution Release and Transfer Registers. A major suspicion was dismantled in Athens – that environmental sustainability policies are limiting innovation by default – because they are rooted into the precautionary principle.

Sustainable development requires innovative solutions that match the innovative nature of Internet and ICT policies, explained Heather Creech, the Knowledge Communications' director at the International Institute for Sustainable Development, Canada.

Story by Pavel Antonov, moderator of the Greening IT workshop at IGF



BlueLink contributes to a global study on information society progress

Lagging of ICT penetration in Bulgaria and lack of civil participation in policy development, the watchdog report reveals.

URL: www.globaliswatch.org

Do governments upkeep their promises to bridge the digital gap and to ensure that information technologies benefit to people and improve their living? This question is unveiled in the first Global Information Society Watch report which monitors what steps the governments made following their commitments in the official declarations of the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS).

The report is prepared by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and its members around the world. The fruits of the information technology 'revolution' are unevenly distributed between countries and within societies, reveals the report which studies the ICT policy situation in twenty-two countries from four regions.

The featured ones are: Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda); Asia (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and the Philippines); Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru); and Eastern Europe (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania), with one report from a Western European country (Spain).

BlueLink developed the Bulgarian country report based on monitoring the local infrastructure and ICT policy development, interviews with experts in the area and extensive examination of the media publications on the topic. The local study reveals lagging of ICT penetration in Bulgaria and lack of civil participation in policy development on the matter.

Therefore in the next years to come Bulgarian authorities should increase their efforts to ensure better access to ICTs and to make the internet accessible to all, the report recommends. The capacity and abilities of the non-governmental sector, working in the ICT field is still not enough utilized by the government – on policy level, but also on project implementation level, on monitoring activities, etc. Bulgarian government needs to develop strong FOSS supportive policy is another advice the BlueLink makes in its watchdog study.

Income Statement

Incomes		
	2006	2005
	BGL	BGL
Grants, Gifts and Donations	151	193
Grants	145	193
Interests of banks and income from exchange operations	0	4
Profit from commercial activities	0	0
Excess of expenses over income	0	0
Total income	151	197

Expenses		
	2006	2005
	BGL	BGL
Project activities	125	186
Administration costs	14	9
Bank charges and expenses from foreign currency operations	6	1
Excess of income over expenses	6	1
Total expenses	151	197

Balance Sheet

Assets		
	2006	2005
	BGL	BGL
Long term assets	8	11
Equipment	7	10
Software	1	1
Current assets	106	33
Accounts receivable	106	1
Cash	10	3
Bank deposits	105	29
Total assets	229	44

Liabilities & Fund Balance		
	2006	2005
	BGL	BGL
Current liabilities	0	2
Liabilities to personnel	0	2
Grants to be spend	216	35
Funds	13	7
Reserve	13	7
Total liabilities and fund balance	229	44

* This Financial Statement was compiled and translated according to the National Accounting Standards of Bulgaria.

** All the figures in the Financial Statement are in thousands Bulgarian leva

Donors and Supporters

To continue operating, BlueLink relies on contributions from its users, committed donors, and all other individuals and organisations interested in empowering civil society, encouraging sustainable development and strengthening democracy in Bulgaria and the Balkans. If you are interested in our activities and services, or if you want to implement a cooperative project, become an intern, or make a donation, please contact us at:

office@bluelink.net

Bank account: IBAN: BG30PRCB92301015164412,
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Thank you for making BlueLink possible!

We express our deep appreciation to all the inspired individuals and non-profit organisations that have supported us, as well as the following donors:

- A**ssociation for Progressive Communications
- B**ulgarian Charity Aid Foundation
- B**ulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation
- B**ulgarian-Swiss Biodiversity Conservation Programme
- C**anada Fund Program for Local Initiatives
- C**harles Stewart Mott Foundation
- D**HV Group – The Netherlands
- D**eutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH
- G**lobal Environment Facility
- E**uropean Commission
- I**nstitute for Sustainable Communities
- M**ilieukontakt Oost-Europa – The Netherlands
- O**pen Society Institute – Sofia
- T**he Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe
- T**IME Foundation
- U**nited Nations Development Programme
- U**nited States Agency for International Development
- W**WF International – Danube-Carpathian Programme
- X**minusY Solidarity Fund

THE CIVIL ENVIRONMENTAL GATEWAY TO BULGARIA

www.bluelink.net



The Civil Environmental Gateway to Bulgaria (www.bluelink.net) is a place to post and obtain information about domestic and international environmental news, events, campaigns, and projects. The portal contains comprehensive information about civil action, nature protection and sustainable development in Bulgaria. At www.bluelink.net you can also find thematic pages, activists' comments on hot topics, a forum, and a way to subscribe to discussion lists. The site has a virtual library, which includes extensive references to comprehensive sources of environmental information as well as a collection of full text articles. The site also provides bulletins, links to electronic versions of Bulgarian and European legislation on access to information and the environment. BlueLink maintains a useful links catalogue divided into categories such as biodiversity, energy and forests. www.bluelink.net also offers a searchable database of environmental non-governmental organizations.

THE BULGARIAN CIVIL SOCIETY INFORMATION PORTAL

www.bluelink.info



The Bulgarian Civil Society Information Portal (www.bluelink.info) aims to create a virtual community for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) which facilitates discussion, offers support, and encourages joint initiatives between Bulgarian CSOs. www.bluelink.info offers free electronic services to organizations involved with youth, volunteers, women, community development and the disadvantaged. The portal regularly features news from The Third Sector and promotes civil action campaigns. CSOs may post current information to the portal through an online form. Like BlueLink's Environmental Gateway, www.bluelink.info offers a link directory, discussion forums and mailing lists. Watch for more features and tools in the near future.

ABOUT BLUELINK

The Mission

BlueLink aims to create a free forum for exchange of information in order to support sustainable development, democracy and civil society.

The Beginning

BlueLink was launched in 1998 by eight Bulgarian environmental organizations and three individuals as a virtual network offering a broad variety of Internet-based services for all individuals, organizations, institutions and media interested in issues relating to the environment, natural resources, and sustainable development in Bulgaria.

BlueLink's Founders:

- Academica GeoEcoClub; Veliko Tarnovo
- Balkani Wildlife Society; Sofia
- Bulgarian Biodiversity Preservation Society "Semperviva"; Pernik
- Centre for Environmental Information and Education; Sofia
- ECO-CLUB 2000; Sofia
- Environmental associations "Za Zemiata" ("For the Earth"); Sofia
- Environmental Youth Club Terra; Blagoevgrad
- Public Environmental Centre for Sustainable Development; Varna
- Pavel Antonov, Vassil Beyazov, Willem Tiebbe Oostenbrink

Structure

BlueLink was registered as a foundation under Bulgaria's Non-Profit Organizations Act in 1999. BlueLink is governed by its Executive Board, which is appointed by the "Council of the Founders" – the supreme body of BlueLink.

Sustainability

To fulfill its mission, BlueLink relies on donations from organizations which benefit from its services. BlueLink also receives grants from local and international donors.

The Beneficiaries

BlueLink serves Bulgarian environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as all other organizations and individuals interested in the issues of sustainable development, nature protection and civil society. Media, academic institutions, municipal and state authorities also benefit from BlueLink's services.

BlueLink is a network of civil society organizations working for civil society organizations in Bulgaria and abroad. Our goal is to improve the effectiveness of civil society organizations by fostering collaboration between them.

Services

- BlueLink's Civil Environmental Gateway to Bulgaria at www.bluelink.net contains comprehensive information about civil action, nature protection and sustainable development in Bulgaria
- BlueLink's Bulgarian Civil Society Information Portal at www.bluelink.info focuses on the activities of women's, youth, community development and volunteer organizations
- BlueLink offers strategic online services for NGOs, including content and information exchange tools, online directories, electronic libraries and online campaigns.
- BlueLink organizes training workshops for NGOs in electronic communication, information management and being an effective media liaison
- BlueLink facilitates the platform and process by which NGOs are nominated and elected to Bulgarian Government working groups and committees.
- BlueLink provides comprehensive information to environmental journalists

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