



**Final Narrative Project Report on the project  
"Development of environmental NGOs electronic networking in Bulgaria" 2004**

BlueLink Foundation, Bulgaria

**Name of the project:** "Development of Environmental NGOs Electronic Networking in Bulgaria" 2004

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**Project Period:** 1 April 2004 – 31 January 2005

This Final Narrative Project Report covers the activities conducted by BlueLink Information Network on the project "Development of environmental NGOs electronic networking in Bulgaria" 2004, funded by The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe, for the whole project period **1 April 2004 – 31 January 2005**.

**Activities planned:**

**A: Content services and information maintenance and upgrade**

Development and adaptation of different APC ActionApps-based content services; News Service; Events Calendar; Announcements; Links collection system; Mailing Lists; Applications setting and development; Maintenance and development of thematic websites

**B: NGO Collaboration: Platform/tool for NGO elections**

**C: NGO Meetings**

Elections working group meeting; BlueLink NGO Steering Group meeting

**D: International and regional cooperation**

**Activities conducted:**

**A: Content services and information maintenance and upgrade**

1. *Development and adaptation of different APC ActionApps-based content services:* BlueLink's web site was innovated and upgraded. The structure was improved and a new design (see annex 1) was developed in order to offer more user-friendly navigation and presentation of the BlueLink's website content. The new structure improved and added to the functionality of BlueLink's web site on <http://www.bluelink.net>. The expected results were achieved as following: updated portal site, with database driven, constantly updated content, organised by categories, fully searchable, easy to navigate, interactive, allowing and inviting active NGO user's input. The main tool for the website development was the Open Source Software: Action Applications toolkit of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC).

The renovation of the BlueLink's website got positive feedback from many NGOs and users and strengthened the content and information flow (see annex 2: Web statistics).

2. *News Service:* Around 300 articles in Bulgarian and 80 in English were published on the news section of BlueLink site for the period January 2004 – January 2005. The news covered the activities and the development of the Bulgarian environmental organizations and general important environmental information.

3. *Environmental News Monitor* – An electronic form for news digest is available on BlueLink's web site. The users are able to subscribe and receive the news directly in their e-mail daily, weekly or monthly. There are more than 200 subscribers for the digest. Their number increased more than twice during the project year 2004.

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*4. Events Calendar:* BlueLink has supported and updated a section for the upcoming events (developed by using APC AA free software) <http://www.bluelink.net/kalendar/en/>. During the reported period more than 110 events were announced through the event calendar. The order of the events is chronological and after the period of the event is over the announcement automatically goes out from the calendar. Through an open form the NGO users could add by themselves the events they organize (<http://www.bluelink.net/kalendar/en/form.shtml>). The form is user-friendly and simple to fill in. When a new event is submitted, BlueLink's editor is notified by e-mail to check and approve the new item.

*5. Announcements:* on the BlueLink's website NGO users have the possibility to announce their initiatives, actions or open job position both through the events calendar open form or through sending e-mail with the announcement to be published in the *News* section on BlueLink's website.

*6. Links collection system:* BlueLink has supported and updated the Links Directory, which contains over 300 links in 27 categories.

*7. Mailing Lists:* The subscribers in the largest mailing list ([ngos@bluelink.net](mailto:ngos@bluelink.net)) are 260 users coming from NGOs, mass media, academic institutions, municipal and state authorities and individuals. BlueLink supports 56 mailing lists, 10 of which were created during the project period.

*8. Applications setting and development:* BlueLink's web portal structure and sections were revised in order to ensure better information services to the NGOs and to meet the growing need for a more elaborated civil environmental database. The development and management of BlueLink's web portal was closely related with the optimised development and utilisation of APC's Action Applications for facilitating and automating content generation, publishing and sharing.

*9. Maintenance and development of thematic websites:* BlueLink continued to develop and support the NGO node of Bulgarian CHM on biodiversity ([www.bluelink.net/chm](http://www.bluelink.net/chm)) and the web portal on Climate Change issues ([www.bluelink.net/climate](http://www.bluelink.net/climate)).

*9.1. Campaigns:* BlueLink reflects all the important campaigns, events and actions of NGOs, connected with environmental protection. During the project period BlueLink updated and further developed with recent news the webpage on genetically modified organisms (GMO) ([www.bluelink.net/gmo](http://www.bluelink.net/gmo)). The website was following and reflecting the NGO campaign for improvement of the new law, which allows GMO in Bulgaria. BlueLink prepared a special website for the NGO campaign *NO to nuclear power plant (NNP) Belene* ([www.bluelink.net/belene](http://www.bluelink.net/belene)). Not only Bulgarian, but also Greenpeace, WISE and many other international NGOs follow and support the campaign.

All the above mentioned thematic websites have also English versions.

The campaigns were also reflected on the regional content sharing platform [www.see-environment.info](http://www.see-environment.info).

Currently BlueLink develops new campaign about the protected areas in Bulgaria, requested by coalition of NGOs.

## **B: NGO Collaboration: Platform/tool for NGO elections**

BlueLink developed the structure and the different functionalities of the platform for NGO elections. The platform implementation and the trial processes were finalized by the end of January 2004 (See annex 3). The NGO election platform is available on-line at [www.vote.bluelink.net](http://www.vote.bluelink.net) at NGOs disposal.

### *1. NGO elections proceeded*

During the reporting period BlueLink as newly chosen by NGOs community coordinator of the NGO election processes, organized and implemented 3 election sessions. NGO representatives for 3 working groups and commissions were elected:

- Working group for preparation of operative program Environment 2007-2013 – 2 NGO representatives were chosen;

**BlueLink Information Network - Bulgaria established in 1998 by:** Public Environmental Centre of Sustainable Development - Varna, Environmental Club "Terra" - Blagoevgrad, Bulgarian Biodiversity Preservation Society Semperviva - Pernik, Academica Geo Eco Club – Veliko Tarnovo, Green Balkans - Sofia, For the Earth, Centre for Environmental Information and Education and ECO-CLUB 2000. BlueLink aims to create a free information forum for democracy, civil society, sustainable development and harmony with nature.

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- Multi institutional Commission on the activities related to "washing wool" in Purvomai town – 2 NGO representatives;
- Working group for development of National action plan on biodiversity conservation in Bulgaria 2005-2010 – 3 NGO representatives.

The three election procedures were used to explore the election processes and to apply each step of the procedures in the new NGO election platform "*Civil e-representation*".

#### *2. NGO election e-platform "Civil e-representation"*

BlueLink designed a demo version of on-line applications in a way to enhance a collaborative decision making of NGOs. The result is online interactive platform, public accessible through Internet, which will be used by environmental NGOs in the future for electing of NGO representatives for different institution bodies. The platform/tool for NGO elections aims at giving opportunity to all elected NGO representatives to exchange information with the public. BlueLink provides electronic maintenance of the election process. Several NGOs was involved in the working group, which discussed the model of the platform and the election process.

The election platform is designed to enable the environmental NGO community to nominate its candidates, and to vote through Internet in order to elect NGO representatives for different institutional bodies.

This essentially new online tool for NGO elections was designed to improve the information dissemination and to support the environmental NGO community in electing its representatives and collaborating common positions and in that way to support the public participation in decision making process. Therefore this will improve the information flow from the general public to the NGO representatives and vice versa. The development of a transparent, open and democratic tool to serve the NGO election process was demanded not only by the NGO sector, but from different government institutions as well. Thus the creation of such a tool will improve the relations between the NGOs and the government bodies. In this regard the existence of such a platform/tool will assist in receiving the support from the society to the NGOs representatives and thus will improve the quality of civil participation in the decision making process.

BlueLink will continue to support the NGO election platform after the end of the project. BlueLink will continuously monitor and evaluate the feedback from the NGOs about the community's needs and demands as a basis for the further development of the platform.

### **C: NGO Meetings**

#### *1. Elections working group meeting*

In order to serve the NGO community more comprehensively and efficiently, BlueLink involved different organisations in an Elections working group. The organisations that had expressed interest to contribute and participate in the Elections working group were invited to a meeting in March 2004. This NGO group was following the process of development of the NGO election platform from the very beginning. The working group gave comments, specified the principles and agreed on the structure of the e-tool. BlueLink presented the demo version of the NGO Election platform online to the Election working group. Their feedback and comments were considered in the future development of the platform.

#### *2. BlueLink NGO Steering Group meeting*

The meeting of the Steering Group was organised on 3 April 2004 in Bankya. BlueLink received positive evaluations of its services from the founders and the direct beneficiaries – the environmental NGOs. The Steering Group meeting helped the BlueLink team to fine-tune and adapt its activities in accordance with the needs of our users, as recognised and expressed by them and to improve and develop new online services.

## **D: International and regional cooperation**

BlueLink continued to connect further Bulgarian environmental NGOs with e-networks and NGOs from South East Europe (SEE), as well as with the global civil society movement through APC. BlueLink promoted electronic networking among environmental NGOs in the SEE region by active participation in regional meetings on electronic networking; by providing on-going consultancy and counselling to NGO young e-networks; continuing support for NGO networks in countries where BlueLink has been previously involved.

### *1. Participation in the Stockholm Challenge Final Event*

BlueLink participated in the Stockholm Challenge Best Practice exhibition (11-14 May 2004). Best IT pioneers from all over the world exchanged ideas and experience on IT use for networking, information exchange and community consolidation. The nominated examples of IT solutions were presented in 6 finalist categories: e-Government, Culture, Health, Education, e-Business and Environment. BlueLink presented the regional platform [www.see-environment.info](http://www.see-environment.info), through which NGOs from SEE region exchange environmental information and use as a tool to improve the access to information on a regional level. The cooperation initiative for information exchange was the one of the 9 finalists in the category "Environment" after a severe competition with over 900 applicants for the annual awards and the only finalist from the Balkan region. The project received high appreciation and positive feedback from the participants in the event.

### *2. Participation in the Second (26-27 January 2004) and in the Third (1-2 July 2004) Task force meeting on electronic tools in Geneva*

BlueLink participated actively in the both meetings presenting the regional cooperation between environmental NGO networks and the exchange of information through the regional content sharing platform [www.see-environment.info](http://www.see-environment.info). There was a serious interest from the participants on the activities and the possibilities of the NGO networks in the SEE region. The content sharing platform [www.see-environment.info](http://www.see-environment.info) was included in the resources of Aarhus clearinghouse (<http://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org>), which was launched by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to highlight and promote awareness of issues covered by the Aarhus Convention. After the meetings BlueLink informed on the results the partners' networks from SEE region by publishing articles on [www.see-environment.info](http://www.see-environment.info).

### *3. Supporting the regional content sharing platform.*

BlueLink managed to raise some additional funds to support the regional content sharing platform [www.see-environment.info](http://www.see-environment.info) and some of the NGO networks in SEE – providing strategic training to GreenKit, Ukraine on network structure development.