



## Final Project Report

**Name of the project:** RReP 2.3 - SEE NGO Networking/ Development of Environmental NGOs  
**Electronic Networking in Bulgaria 2001 - 2002**

**Project Manager:** Milena Georgieva

**Period:** 1 January 2002 – 31 December 2003  
BlueLink Foundation, Bulgaria

This project aims to strengthen environmental NGO electronic networking in Bulgaria and to link it to the other emerging networks in SEE. The network is open for all NGOs in Bulgaria. BlueLink Foundation oversees the implementation of the project in the country and ensures its transparent and democratic functioning.

The activities planned in the project are based on the BlueLink Strategic Work Plan and on the results of the Needs Assessment survey, conducted by BlueLink.

### **Activities planned:**

- I On-line content and services development*
- II Meetings and seminars*
- III Sub-contractors*
- IV Promoting SEE Regional Networking*

### **Activities reported:**

#### **I. Online content, services development and maintenance**

**1.1 News Service:** Around 370 articles in Bulgarian and 134 more in English were published on the news section of the BlueLink site for the period January 2002 – December 2003. The news covered the activities and the development of the Bulgarian environmental organizations.

**1.2. 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 on their e-mail daily, weekly or monthly. There are 76 subscribers for the digest.

**1.3. Links collection system** : BlueLink had created and developed a special Useful Links Directory, which contains 300 links in 27 categories.

**1.4. Mailing Lists:** The subscribers in the largest mailing list ([ngos@bluelink.net](mailto:ngos@bluelink.net)) are 260 NGOs, mass media, academic institutions, municipal and state authorities and individuals. BlueLink supports 46 mailing lists.

**1.5. Events Calendar:** BlueLink had created and developed a separate section for the upcoming events <http://www.bluelink.net/kalendar/en/>. The order of the events is chronological: first is displayed the most recent event and than the later events . 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.

**1.6. Announcements:** BlueLink covers different announcements, which could be of NGO interest, on its web site [www.bluelink.net](http://www.bluelink.net).

**1.7. Campaigns:** BlueLink reflects all the important campaigns, events and actions of NGOs, connected with environmental protection. BlueLink presents 15 campaigns on a national level plus 2 campaigns on a regional and global level.

1.8. *Discussion Forums*: BlueLink prepared an online forum for environmental NGOs. The forum gives an opportunity to the visitors to participate in environmental discussions, to express opinions, to suggest alternative solutions, etc.

1.9. *Online search tool*: Two search ways are available on BlueLink: a tool for key word search, based on Action Applications, and through categories.

1.7. *Applications setting and development*: BlueLink upgraded the last Action Applications version 2.2. BlueLink developed an Action Applications based research tools for all databases in BlueLink and an option for adding comments to the news. The new section 'Events Calendar' and the open form for submitting upcoming events is based on Action Applications.

1.8. *Theme oriented web sites*: BlueLink's team prepared a web site on Biodiversity. Gathering information on organizations, dealing with biodiversity, connecting with them to discuss projects and databases was a long process. The Biodiversity NGO node has simple design and user-friendly structure based on the rules the information web sites are developed. This site is linked to the national Bulgarian CHM (Clearing House Mechanism) on biodiversity. The address is: [www.bluelink.net/chm](http://www.bluelink.net/chm)

A new web site with database on waters' issues ([www.bluelink.net/water](http://www.bluelink.net/water)) was constructed in cooperation with EcoSouthWest. (*More about it on the part III Sub-contractors.*)

## II Meetings and seminars

### 2.1. *Training of trainers workshop (TOT)*

Two TOT meetings took place. The trainers had one training for environmental NGOs needs and one for human rights organization. An internal site for the communication of the TOT members was developed and a special mailing list for the group's coordination and communication was created.

### 2.3. *Training workshops*

#### 2.3.1. *Training Workshop in Blagoevgrad, 2-3 November 2002*

The first training under the e-networking working plan for Bulgaria took place on 2-3.11.2002 in Blagoevgrad. The training aimed at developing the skills and knowledge of the environmental NGOs from the region of Southwest Bulgaria as well as strengthening the cooperation and networking abilities of the activists. Fourteen members of different environmental NGOs from the region took part in the sessions. The programme covered topics such as: Introduction in the Internet, Searching the Internet, Writing for the Internet, Online publishing, Netqu бере, Internet info -sources for Bulgarian environmental activists.

#### 2.3.2. *Training Workshop in Varna, 22-23 March, 2003*

15 NGO representatives from the town and North Eastern Bulgaria participated in the two days workshop. The program of the training is following the BlueLink's know-how, prepared for these trainings and focused on strategic use of Internet, Internet writing, online publishing tools and some other topics. The evaluation report of the workshop was provided by BlueLink, based on the participants' evaluation.

#### 2.3.3. *Training Workshop in Russe, 20-21 June, 2003*

The same seminar was organized and held in Russe with 17 participants. A very active national organization for the rights of disabled people – Center for Independent Life - asked 3 representatives of this group to be included among the trainees. We think that this cooperation will improve the communication between different NGOs and enlarge BlueLinks' users.

#### 2.3.4. *Training Workshop in Gabrovo, 6-7 December, 2003*

Similar seminar was organized and held in Gabrovo with 14 participants. NGO representatives from the town and Central Bulgaria were included in the two days workshop. The program was common with the previous workshops and matched with the participants' needs and expectations.

### 2.3.5. *BlueLink TeaHouse during the National Conference of Bulgarian Environmental NGOS, November 23-24, 2002*

At the beginning of November 2002 BlueLink has actively joined the preparation and the information support of the most important for the Bulgarian environmental sector event – the National Conference of the Environmental Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). BlueLink reflected the preparation and the conference itself on the National Conference's web site (<http://www.bluelink.net/meeting/index.shtml>).

### 2.3.6. *Training Workshop in Pomorie, November 27-28, 2002*

This seminar was organized and financed by REC Sofia, but BlueLink supported the organizers of the event with preparation of the training materials and the agenda for the seminar. The training and the facilitation of the workshop were also responsibility of BlueLink. The participants were trained in strategic use of Internet, Internet writing, online publishing tools and some other topics. The evaluation report of the workshop was provided by BlueLink, based on the participants' evaluation.

## III Sub-contractors

### 3.1. *The Partners Involvement Workshop (PIW)*

PIW was organized by BlueLink to discuss the two years strategic plan with partner NGOs. The main achievements of the PIW are:

- involving wide number of organizations to give personal input in developing further the electronic networking of the Bulgarian environmental NGOs (26 NGOs expressed interest in participating in the workshop)
- decentralizing the operation with the focal points (four organizations), thus empowering the trust and transparency within the BlueLink Information Network
- identifying the possibilities for further development of the BlueLink network
- task division between the newly identified focal points and plan for future joint work

### 3.2. *Steering Group meetings*

The Steering Group meetings aimed to:

- discuss the report of the active Executive Board on the activities of BlueLink
- discuss and approve the Strategic Plan for operation of BlueLink in 2002 / 2003
- discuss the possibility for BlueLink's opening to new target groups.

### 3.3. *National Water Database*

The sub-contractor EcoSouthWest submitted to BlueLink a detailed description of the Water Database, so BlueLink prepared a web site on the issue ([www.bluelink.net/water](http://www.bluelink.net/water)).

### 3.4. *Production of bookmarks*

This initiative replaced the planned news-supply from BlueLink subcontractors, approved by the donor. BlueLink prepared and disseminated in cooperation with other NGOs several bookmark types, rising the public awareness on particular environmental problems and protected species. The bookmarks are disseminated in libraries, bookshops and other public places in Sofia and other regions. The bookmarks had attractive design, a sentence that pinpoints the problem and web address for more information. The initiative aimed to reach broader audience of people, to show them hot environmental issues in an attractive way and thus to cover broader group of citizens within the information dissemination.

## IV Promoting SEE Regional Networking

### 4.1. *First Regional SEE NGO Electronic Networks (REGNET) Meeting*

The First Regional SEE NGO Electronic Networks Meeting took place on 28-29 March 2002 in Sofia, Bulgaria. Members of networks from eight countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania and Yugoslavia) met to share experience and to discuss the challenges of the electronic networking in the region. The official opening of the event took place in Sofia and was attended by donors, ambassadors, environmental ministry representatives and journalists.

Output from the meeting: the participants agreed their efforts should be focused on promoting electronic networks, supporting the NGOs activities, encouraging cooperation among different networks.

#### 4.2. Workshop on e-networking in Croatia

Similar to the workshops facilitated by BlueLink in Moldova, Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo/a, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the last initiative of the same type took place in Croatia. The hosting organization was Green Istra, Croatia. The results from the workshop were:

- the advantages of electronic communication were demonstrated to NGOs
- NGOs were encouraged to exchange information and form networks
- the level of skills and usage of electronic communication tools by NGOs were evaluated
- the needs and challenges of NGO networking in Croatia were identified
- a group of NGOs, ready to develop an electronic network were identified

#### 4.3. Training workshop in Kosovo/a, November 15-17, 2002

BlueLink was invited as a trainer for the second workshop to share its knowledge and experience with representatives from environmental NGOs in Kosovo/a. It was natural continuation of the first workshop, held on January 18-20, 2002 and facilitated by BlueLink. The workshop was implemented in a way to upgrade the knowledge on the NGOs' advantages and benefits from the electronic communications and to provide the NGOs with more advanced skills regarding the active participation and use of the e-networking.

BlueLink also prepared a press release about this event for the APC news to inform the NGO e-networking community about the efforts and successes of their colleagues from the SEE region ([http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/SEE\\_Networking/APC\\_Kosovo.html](http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/SEE_Networking/APC_Kosovo.html)).

#### 4.4. Sharing experience on the Yugoslav national meeting on December 7, 2002

BlueLink Information Network was invited from Young Researchers of Serbia to attend the national meeting and to present as more experienced network the good practices of e-networking. The content manager Milena Georgieva made a presentation on the activities of BlueLink as an example for a successful information electronic network. The Executive Director Nina Blagoeva and Milena Georgieva shared their experience with representatives of different Yugoslav environmental NGOs. The meeting was featured by a news release in the SEE Environment Watch of the REPC (<http://www.repc.net/tipsheet/index.html#2>).

#### 4.5. 2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Meeting of the Environmental NGO Electronic Networks in SEE, 4-5 April, Prishtina

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Meeting of the Environmental NGO Electronic Networks in SEE took place on April 4-5 in Prishtina and Brezovica, Kosovo/a. BlueLink's leading role in assisting the foundation of three new networks in the region was widely noted at this meeting. BlueLink's team prepared the draft statement of the participants.

#### 4.6. First meeting of the Aarhus Convention Task Force on Electronic Information Tools, Sofia, Boyana

The meeting took place on June 23-24 in Sofia. A member of BlueLink was the only representative of a Bulgarian non-profit organization on this meeting. A presentation on the networking of the environmental NGOs in SEE was made. There was a serious interest from the participants on the activities and the possibilities of the NGO networks in the SEE region.

### Other activities, included in the project

#### *Publications: BlueLink's Bi-Annual Report*

The report entitled "Civil society goes online" covers the network's activities during the past years 2001-2002, focused on the services development and partners collaboration. A project report is prepared and published as a major component of BlueLink's Annual Report. The project report / BlueLink Annual Report will be distributed to NGO users and the media for promoting the work made by BlueLink and REC.

#### *BlueLink's participation in computer distribution*

BlueLink participated in announcing, application evaluation and nomination of granted NGOs for receiving computers by REC. BlueLink announced the computer grant for NGOs on its web site [www.bluelink.net](http://www.bluelink.net). In cooperation with REC Sofia the NGO applications were discussed and nominated. Because of the big number of eligible and quality NGO applications, REC Sofia and BlueLink suggested BlueLink to search for better offer for the computers in order more NGOs to receive computers: nominated NGOs were 12, the grant was announced as 7 computers. Due to BlueLink's efforts, a suitable offer with all needed parameters was available.

**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.



**How the indicators for success were met:**

- Number of news published on the BlueLink portal site during the reported period: approximately 2 per day (at the beginning of the project: approximately 3 per week);
- Number of NGOs, which publish news: 8
- Number of NGOs-mailing-list users: 260
- Number of NGO mailing lists, hosted by BlueLink: 46 mailing lists
- Number of trainings, made upon request in the office: approximately 1 per month;
- Approximate daily number of visits in the BlueLink portal site: more than 400 (in the beginning of the project: approximately 160).

***The role of the project for the NGO e-networking in Bulgaria and in SEE region***

The project *REReP 2.3 - SEE NGO Networking/ Development of Environmental NGOs Electronic Networking in Bulgaria 2001 – 2002* have a significant impact on the strengthening and development of BlueLink's core activities in the country as well as the regional partnership and cooperation in SEE region. BlueLink was able to increase and develop its information services and to generate qualitative online content in order to meet the NGO needs. More online content, more online services for NGOs and more NGO trainings led to a visible improvement of the environmental e-networking in Bulgaria. At the same time BlueLink had the opportunity to meet and to share knowledge and experience with the e-networks from the other SEE countries. The activities within REReP 2.3 project: meetings, workshops, etc. stimulated and supported some joint activities. The partnership between the e-networks from the SEE countries has as a result the cooperative project: *Regional Content Sharing Project in SEE region*.