



report
2007-2009
bluelink.net

BLUELINK CREW



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NOTE BY THE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

Looking back at more than 10 years of work for supporting the environmental civil activists via strategic use of information and communication technologies, BlueLink has a lot to share and a lot to learn from.

In the last 3 years – 2007-2009, the organization has gone through a period of administrative transition and of refocusing on our priority fields of work. The primary aim of BlueLink has been re-asserts – offering viable and efficient ICTs for the strategic work of active citizenship and nature protection.

Going back to our traditional partners from the environmental NGO community, we are working to strengthen our year-long services – campaigning (e.g. www.BeleNe.org), online elections for NGO representatives at government committees (www.vote.bluelink.net), secure and reliable communication channels (<http://www.bluelink.net/bg/services/lists.shtml>). At the same time we are developing new and innovative online tools - e.g. online alerts for forest crime (www.spasigorata.net), interactive volunteer database (www.dobrovolec.bg), networking of non-formal activist groups and citizens (www.grajdani.eu , beta version).

Our future activities are even more ambitious – online networking of traditional NGOs and non-formal activist groups, advocacy for internet rights and NGO representatives' participation at state committees for the next EU programming period, strong independent media presence, offering citizens tools for interactive user content generation, online monitoring on urban development, etc.

Keep up with us!
December 2010



Vera Staevska



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GROWING STRONG

HELPING CITIZENS TO OPPOSE GOVERNMENT’S PRESSURE ON THEIR INTERNET FREEDOM AND COMMUNICATION RIGHTS

Internet and new media have boosted civil society activism in Bulgaria in 2006 - 2009. Coincidentally, the pressure against internet freedom and communication rights of Bulgarian citizens have grown to unprecedented level. To respond to them and meet better the needs of the re-emerging individual activism in Bulgaria further effort to protect internet and communication rights is needed on national and global level.

Similar to other post-socialist countries over its first decade of change Bulgaria had seen an influx of Western donor aid. Unfortunately most of it resulted in the

formation of a clique of well-paid NGO functionaries, with little or no connection to the real needs and demands of citizens. New media formats, social networking opportunities and broader access to internet have been instrumental in the emerging of a new generation of activists. In contrast to the majority of NGO professionals, the new activists are mostly young or in their active age, with regular jobs and incomes, and driven by genuine concern and commitment to certain causes. Environment has been the first among these causes, which lead to growing protest against the abuse of protected natural areas in the country.

Frightened by the success of protests against the destruction of nature, the authorities did not hesitate to investigate and intimidate bloggers. BlueLink has recognised the growing need to

put more efforts in the field of Internet and communication rights. In 2008 we started the campaign “FreeNet - Hands off bloggers” to unite citizens, organizations and media hoping to exchange freely information over the Internet - a fundamental and inalienable right in a real civil society: <http://freenet.bluelink.net/>.

“What we are experiencing today is growing pressure on individual expression, basic rights to assemble and protest, resistance by all means to public access to information and participation. Internet, communication rights and new media have a lot to suffer - and a lot to offer to civil society in this context”, Dimitur Vassilev - Velin, a BlueLink co-founder, involved in environmental protest and activism since 1988, pointed out.

THE GREENS NETWORKED



A few years ago the web began to offer more and more free instruments to act together. Petitions, surveys, comments, open and closed chats, online causes, wikis, video-sharing sites, blogs, mashups – those are some of the “acknowledged” civil tools. And all of a sudden people get unlimited possibilities to react, to influence some processes just, for example, using the camera on their mobile.

In 2008-2009, during the explosion of demonstrations against the destruction of Bulgarian nature, few bloggers initiated debate and provoked reaction faster and better than the traditional actors engaged in the environmental cause from two decades. The fresh



Green activists protest to save “Strandja” Natural park. 2008 Sofia. Photo: Donka Kaltcheva

and understandable comments, the alternative, fast reports, the multimedia with good quality touched thousands.

Delayed but still very important, now came the moment to understand and benefit from the new possibilities. Bulgarian citizens still don’t know how to use their new freedom, to protect their new rights, to built open and democratic society.

BlueLink focusses its energy to empower with web 2.0 instruments the citizen’s active participation in the process of the social change.

As Bulgaria is a metaphor for dysfunctional legal basis that is formally coherent with legal requirements, citizens need practical everyday solutions to help them exercise their right to control and guide the policy making and legislation implementation in the country.

We mobilize people from local communities to generate ideas for ICT applications they need in order to influence their everyday surroundings. We believe that developing democracy-centered ICTs will help create practical e-citizenship behavior patterns. The joint efforts ensure efficient guidance to develop ideas and adapt the

suitable practices. And that creates opportunities for communication among environmental activists, governmental institutions and the media.

But the creative pathfinders already work in completely new environment. They became independent from the traditional media. Because they are media themselves. The process is difficult although everybody could search now the unlimited set of necessary tools. Online the users could publish free (almost) all the information that they wish to promote in the same or better quality than, for example, the websites of the newspapers. They could use the multimedia formats that they need or ensure to its users all the comfort to make them full contributors. For the first time the individual, willing to change and help, is so powerful.

BlueLink Chronicles 2007 -2009

January 2007

Sofia – Training seminar: “**EU Environmental Policy** and Financial Instruments and Development of Tools for Communication”. The training was part of the Enviropinfo project.

February 2007

Bucharest – regional deGreen Agenda seminar under the BlueLink’s MATRA project for **sustainable regional development** in Bulgaria and Romania.

March 2007

Szentendre – BlueLink received an award from UNECE as a “Leading Contributor” to the **Aarhus Clearinghouse Mechanism** and for its contribution to the work program of the Task Force on Electronic Information Tools.

BlueLink’s joint project for implementing a national campaign on **Persistent Organic Polluters** was approved for funding by the Global Environmental Facility Small Grants Program.

April 2007

Sofia – First meeting of NGOs, partners in **MATRA project**.

BlueLink joined My Coast project with the **elaboration of a project web site**.

HOW THE INTERNET COULD “SAVE THE FOREST”

Since the early nineties the question: “is there a chance to end abuses in Bulgarian forests and who will dare to do it” has no answer. Institutions and organizations pass on accusations, programs and promises and in the meantime hundred thousands hectares of high quality wood disappear in various and mysterious ways. BlueLink’s platform “Save forest” appeared when it became obvious that no one will change the “status quo”. The initiative is not an isolated phenomenon of focussed civil energy. In the recent years the environmental movement showed that he would make the necessary to prevent the destruction and looting of Bulgaria. “Save the forest”, however, was a new step in the process, because



BlueLink trains volunteers to use Save the Forest online platform. 2009, Rila mountain. Photo: Vera Staevska

succeed to get experts from organizations and institutions together to face the public opinion.

What happened? The power of Internet technology has been applied to a real problem - corruption practices in the management of forest resources, cause for the forest desertion (as estimated from our partners at the World Wild Fund – WWF Bulgaria – with 10m3 per minute).

For the first time everyone could submit detailed signal of possible violation, the information is immediately forwarded to forest experts and if they confirm the crime, the offenders are punished by the responsible institutions.

To help the conservation of forests cooperated tourists, locals, people who for one reason or another visit the woods and even anonymous employees of the

forestry administration, outraged by the gray economic practices in the system. Getting the possibility to do something real, they make full use of it.

On the one hand, public confidence was won by independent civilian position of the platform - the signals are free – published in the global network without censorship: “Even if we do not have the capacity to check all signals, the system makes sense. You can not imagine how this civilian control prevents criminals. Especially when it comes to the participation of forest agents, it is very important. The fact that is known about what happens discourage them, at least for some time”, comments engineer Jordan Terziiski, who contributed a lot to the achievement of the first training to use the platform.

On the other hand, the fact that the new administration of Executive Agency of Forestry partnered directly with the

NGOs behind the online platform and conduct official inspections of alerts, is significant. Apparently there is a chance a constructive and effective civil action to mobilize various stakeholders.

The media and public response on the issue gave a new impetus to the debate about the necessary changes in policy of management of natural resources. The partners in the project <http://www.spasigorata.net> had regular meetings with the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food Georgi Kostov and discussions on new Draft Law on forest use. On the round table on forest policy with non-governmental experts and representatives of ministries of agriculture and the environment Kostov said: “Nobody authorized BlueLink to create this platform. However, it works and we, from the institutions, see that there is interest to it. As a person from the administration, I believe that we

May 2007

Sofia – May-June-July – A series of meetings with the American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria to common activities with the Bulgarian NGO society for elaboration of a **mechanism to influence the Bulgarian eco-politics**.

Barcelona – Meeting of European members of the APC. BlueLink suggested an initiative to build an international **portal for Information Technology and environmental sustainability**.

June 2007

Sofia – Round table “**Media and Natura**”; BlueLink is co-organizer.

Sofia – **Seminar for BeleNE!** coalition: Working with the Media”.

Sofia – Round table: “**Nuclear Energy** and the Bulgarian Media”.

Started “Persistent Organic Pollutants” **campaign – website**, promotion materials, pres conferences and round tables.

July 2007

BlueLink started online campaign for **freedom of speech in the Internet** – FreeNet campaign: <http://freenet.bluelink.net/>.



Make Art - Save the Forest. Mois Moshev (monomon.me)

must work together”.

Come to light and the public pressure, and the spirit in the state administration to clean up the illegal practices. “Save the forest” highlight the desire of establishing effective frameworks for manag-

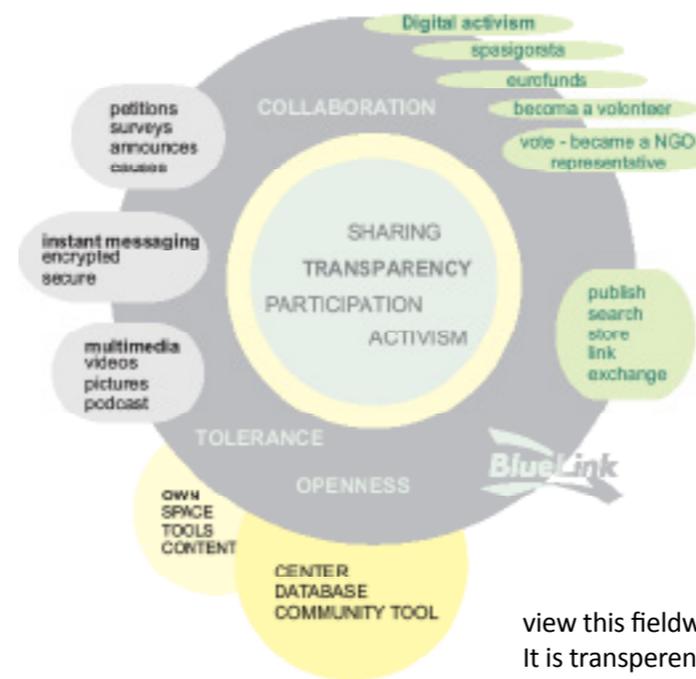
ing forests in terms of ecosystems and their significance beyond the idea that “the tree was just wood”. For the first time from far ago the declared intentions for future state policy in the forest field coincided with accumulated intolerance of civil crimes, hidden “deep in

the woods”.

On this successful experience we, at BlueLink, hope to elaborate on the platform. Our plans include: building a strong volunteer network, the institutionalization of the partnership with IAG and the mechanism of communication to controls the signals and extend the platform to other illegal activities - poaching, construction in protected areas, unregulated middens.

Also we intend to attract more partners from the responsible institutions (Ministry of environment, municipal administrations).

This is the direction that we will follow - facilitation to the individual citizens through adequate technology. Technologies to help each of us respond to - and change - the problems around.



The environment that we are part of.

BlueLink is a part of community, a step from a process. We support the creation of an online environment

TECHNOLOGY AND NETWORK

for all - individuals, informal civil groups or traditional ngos to work together and be the activist using the world wide web. We don't have the ambition to be the center and to control the process. It is a free evolution and it develops naturally on different levels.

From our point of view this fieldwork has some principals. It is transparent, open, tolerant. It is actively used to share and participate. Its members promote ideas and practices, search for new ones, organise the working activities in data bases and exchange

experiences. The community use online tools for social change. Petitions, surveys, announces, causes are created and shared via meetings, instant messaging, e-mails. They are published and visualized in all possible multimedia formats.

The new online platform is complex solution. The user has multiple choice. He can operate with all the available information - he can choose to read, share and comment, to search in all formats of content, archive and data bases. He can participate putting to work various digital activism tools – to signal for problems, to volunteer in different organizations and spontaneous activities.

And he can be a full contributor – to built his own space and to bring out his personal input there.

DO YOU REPLACE FREEDOM FOR SECURITY?

BlueLink contributed to every edition of Global Information Society Watch – the report of the Association of Progressive Communication, focused on access to online information, intellectual property rights, knowledge rights, freedom of expression and access to educational materials and libraries.

Data retention – key issue for Bulgaria

Since 2008 the Bulgarian public has been increasingly alarmed by persistent legislative and policy pressures to impose restrictions on privacy in online communications. New regulations aimed at establishing rules for retaining electronic traffic data for security reasons and a

lack of transparency in the digitalisation process, suggest increasing state control over electronic communications and freedom of speech. Concerns over censorship of electronic communication have been expressed by foreign observers, but on a more positive note these issues have also triggered widespread public reaction and debate in Bulgaria's parliament, the traditional medias and the blogosphere. As a result, some drastic legislative changes intended to limit privacy and other online communication rights have been stopped or delayed. Some newly formed political movements, rooted in a re-emergence of green activism, has embraced Internet rights as a core part of its campaigning. The year 2008 marked the start of implementing European Union (EU) Directive 2006/24/EC on data retention in Bulgarian legislation. Allegedly in order to implement it, in January 2008 State Regulation 40 gave the Ministry of Inte-

August 2007

Sofia – In its role of observer of the implementation of the **Aarhus Convention** in Bulgaria BlueLink informed the Ministry of Environment about the lack of discussion with NGOs on implementation of the Convention. Following the intervention of BlueLink, the institution has invited the community for debate.

September 2007

Sardinia – Seminar on **Web 2.0** for youth NGOs. Exchange of experience between online networks and youth organizations.

Sofia – Meeting with NGOs, business, media to discuss development strategy in the field of free and **democratic use of ICT**. With the participation of Executive agency “Electronic Communication Networks and Information Systems”.

BlueLink launched two new **websites**: Enviroinfo for European environmental policy: <http://www.enviroinfo.bluelink.net/>; POPs for the campaign on Persistent Organic Pollutants: <http://www.bluelink.net/pops>;

October 2007

Belgrade – Ministerial Meeting “**Environment for Europe**”. BlueLink organized and conducted an **on-line talk show**.

rior direct access to all electronic communications (i.e., mobile and internet) data, except for the content of messages.

After wide public opposition, and a court trial initiated by the civil society Access to Information Programme (PDI), a court decision was issued to the effect that the regulation contradicts both the Bulgarian Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights. An amendment to the law was made, stipulating that access to the data is subject to a court warrant, and only to be used for investigating capital offences and cyber crime.

Dangerous development

After Bulgarian Parliamentary elections in July 2009, the new government was formed by the political party GERB. The changes wanted by the new government

were even more restrictive to human rights. They propose granting the Ministry of Interior access to traffic data at suspicions beyond the restricted area of “serious crime” (meaning one punished by convictions of over 5-year imprisonment) and introduce the notion of an “interface” available to the Ministry for constant access to this data. After first voting in late December 2009 and consistent civil opposition to these legislative amendments, the Parliament voted on 17 February 2010 a milder version, granting access only in cases of “serious crime” investigation”. Still, traffic data will be retained and made directly available to the Ministry of Interior, contradicting the stipulations of the Bulgarian Constitution and the EU Directive 2006/24/EC on data retention.

New trends

The civil society sector focused on ac-

Hague – Partnership meeting on the project HA-GRID – part of the **information campaign** for 7 Framework Program for Technological Cooperation of the European Commission.

Launching of a feedback mechanism through **personal blogs for the NGO representatives** selected by the online voting platform of BlueLink: <http://www.bluelink.net/voteblog/>.

November 2007

Rio de Janeiro – APC bi-annual Council meeting. BlueLink advocated for including the topic of environmental sustainability into the next APC strategy. **APC awarded BlueLink** for contributing to the environmental protection by promoting utilization of ICTs.

Blagoevgrad – BlueLink held a **seminar**: “Modern Information and Communication Technologies in Use of the Civic Activism”.

Skopje – International forum: “**Inclusive e-Government**”. BlueLink participated with a presentation: “Web standards for usability and accessibility”.

BlueLink submit an offer for a second project on OPAC (as subcontractors for the **development of Internet sites**). The project was approved.

BlueLink made a proposal for **inclusion of BlueLink and PECSD to SF team** project (as continuation of activities under the Matra project).



cess to information and human rights has been working in two main policy areas:

- access to online communication, which is in line with the official policy on strengthening internet infrastructure and is supported by the government;
- digital rights, which in general needs to be defended against the government-proposed legislation.

In general, further public involvement is expected in the following areas:

- opposition against infringements of internet and communication rights. This includes privacy and freedom of speech, that have typically been part of the Bulgarian authority's oppressive culture. State control over internet and mobile communications and the electronic media is in the limelight and



is likely to remain a hot topic in the online public sphere;
- the re-emergence of green and other activism, primarily using internet-based communications. This form of activism challenges the present political culture, still using practices of control and un-

Protest against the threats to freedom of speech on the Internet. 2008, Sofia. The inscription is a paraphrase of the well known thought, attributed to Benjamin Franklin: "Those Who Sacrifice Liberty For Security Deserve Neither". Photo: Michel Bozgunov

clear decision making, and demands more transparency and citizen participation.

FREENET CAMPAIGN

In 2008 BlueLink started the Freenet online campaign against harassment of bloggers and environment protesters by the police and secret services. A broad coalition has been formed by different pressure groups in Bulgaria, to oppose planned law amendments aimed to exclude internet from the scope of basic communication privacy rights guaranteed by Bulgaria's constitution. The situation is not unique to Bulgaria. Similar trends symptoms of net oppression could be observed across the EU, certainly in the UK where activists have recently been spied upon by civil servants, and treated as terrorists. Circumstances in the developing world countries are in many ways similar to the developments in Bulgaria and elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

BlueLink's Executive Board Statement :

“ The executive board and the founders of BlueLink express protest against the actions of the police on July 12, 2007.

On that day Michel Bozgunov was summoned and warned not to publicize information about upcoming, unauthorized environmental protests (flash mobs), in support of the Strandja nature park, through his personal blog. We contend that the actions above are in violation of the constitution, which prohibits authorities from curtailing the rights of citizens because of their beliefs.

The freedom of speech, thought and conscience are explicitly declared in our constitution and are irrevocable and inviolable human rights.

December 2007

Varna – BlueLink held a **seminar**: “Modern Information and Communication Technologies in Use of the Civic Activism”.

Geneva – Aarhus Convention Sixth meeting of the **Task Force on Electronic Information Tools** followed by the International ECOs Strategy Meeting “Reinforcing the Aarhus Convention”.

January 2008

E-vote: nominations for NGO representatives of Ministry of Agriculture and Food - Working program for developing Fishery sector.

February 2008

Amsterdam – Kick-off meeting of project Staccato for **sustainable energy concepts** in existing residential areas.

Sofia – BlueLink discussed with the Social Ministry the use of the **on-line platform for electing NGO representatives** in governmental bodies.

BlueLink launched EcoVarna.info **website** (PESCD).

E-vote: nominations for NGO representatives for the Monitoring committees on the trans-border programs.



Therefore we declare that the actions of the General Directorate for Combat against the Organized Crime in this particular case are a direct breach of article 37, 38 and 39 of Bulgarian's Constitution and a dangerous precedent for groundless violations of human rights.

The citizens' information network BlueLink was created to encourage Internet use and new information technologies for rallying and strengthening civil society, democracy and nature protection in Bulgaria. Michel Bozgunov has been an employee at BlueLink since 2004.

As founders, staff, users and sympathizers of www.bluelink.net we declare that:

- We unconditionally support the actions of each engaged citizen, who have the right to express his or her position on actions (or lack thereof) of Bulgarian institutions through writing or other

communication forms;

- We support and will defend the unconditional right of every Bulgarian citizen to peaceful and non-violent protests and for information dissemination of such protests, recalling the European convention for the protection of human rights and the fundamental freedoms and rights of Bulgarian citizens guaranteed by the Constitution and the laws of Republic of Bulgaria and the European Union;

- We insist that the Parliament, the Government and the Minister of internal affairs, who are directly responsible for the actions of the General Directorate for Combat against the Organized Crime and the police, to give a clear signal to the Bulgarian society, that they emphatically disavow themselves from using intimidation and oppression of civil expression, which has no place in a democratic country, and a member of the European Union;

- We currently support and will continue to support the dissemination of valuable, civil information from www.bluelink.net, from its employees and users, as well as from other information sources and citizens, regardless of what local or foreign institutions, or their representatives, it affects.

- We will continue initiating all possible legal actions to protect free speech, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, in compliance with the Constitution, laws and international agreements to which Bulgaria is bound. As a member of the Association for Progressive Communications (<http://www.apc.org>), BlueLink has informed its partners from all around the world of the police's arbitrariness in Bulgaria and we have initiated a campaign against the violations of freedom of speech on the Internet in Bulgaria at <http://freenet.bluelink.net/>.

BLUELINK FOUNDED PRIZE FOR ONLINE CIVIL ACTIVISM

Trough BlueLink pass thousands of virtual users with great ideas and initiatives. But most of them don't have enough resources to reach the final action, often the online groundwork doesn't evolve to concrete results out of the virtual environment. Therefore, the initiatives that succeed really to change something are very valuable as experience and message.

Our know-how is focused on the online activism. We recognize as working civil action this, whose digital activity has been the reason for real, offline results. For example the discussions about the violations against nature led to the action at many levels – from

expert acts towards responsible institutions – alerts, complaints and cases, to the mass protests that “explain” the issue to everybody.

It is important that the successful practices are promoted, understood and multiplied. We decided to contribute to this and in 2009 BlueLink founded an Award for Online Civic Activism. In December last year Konstantin Dichev from association “Green Balkans” received netbook with range of tools to work on field and to cope with the huge volume of work, which has undertaken – environmental protection, compliance with laws, defense of the environmental rights of the local communities. Despite of despair obstacles – corruption at all levels, lack of funds, refusal for support from partners and institutions Dichev succeed. For this he had to turn back on the rules of diplomacy, to confront powerful people in



March 2008

Varna – Meeting of watchdog teams with NGO representatives in SF (**structural funds for sustainable development**) monitoring committees.

Sofia – Round table on **citizens participation** in the decision making process on EC level.

April 2008

Sofia – POPs events – **round table, seminar** for MSE, meeting of NGOs.

Approved **core funding for BlueLink** from C.S.Mott foundation.

May 2008

Sofia – Discussion of possible **joint IT activities** with UNDP and with the Executive agency “Electronic Communication Networks and Information Systems”.

Sofia – National conference on **EU Funds** under the Matra project.

Budapest – Work package leaders meeting for Staccato - **sustainable energy concepts** - project.

June 2008

Riga – Meeting of the Parties of the **Aarhus convention**. BlueLink took part as panelist and facilitator.

Berlin – **NGO meeting** for educational program.

RECOGNITION

institutions and businesses, and not to be afraid, as NGO actor, to remain without money because attacking ministries controlling grant programs.

Konstantine used active BlueLinks' network without being an IT professional or an avid user of new medias. Thematic mailing lists, the Blog of the NGO representatives in working groups and committees in the institutions, our site, where the organizations publish information about their activities were part of his online channels to reach the authorities and the general public.

Dichevs' signals have led to a series of checks on illegal felling, the information has been shared with police and prosecution, were punished dozens of functionaries, licenses for felling have been withdrawn.

Alerts for abuse of the use of mineral

resources pushed several ministries to come out with statements, to declare that are necessary changes in the new Law on Mineral Resources to improve their management.

And when the authorities had been disagree with the findings of Dichev about the danger of the use of arsenic and cyanide in extraction of gold, they justify and explain their actions, which was undoubtedly progress compared with the "standard" disregard and information blackout. Hard and one-sided the Environmental Ministry is trying to defend the controversial projects in protected areas such as the lift above Panichishte (Rila mountain), but thanks to Dichevs' work the institution had to give concrete explanations to its activities.

The first winner of the prize is a typical representative of the group of active citizens which we want to help. The eager

July 2008

Sofia – Meeting at BlueLink office with the deputy ambassador of Germany to present BlueLink's activities and discuss possible **actions for environmental protection**.

Sofia – BlueLink organized meeting between **Microsoft and Bulgarian NGOs**.

Budapest – Seminar and an international **conference on data retention**, organized by APC.

Sofia – Round table with institutions on **data retention** with The Internet Society Bulgaria.

September 2008

BlueLink prepared the Bulgarian part of the APC's **Global Information Society Watch report** for 2008: <http://www.giswatch.org/gisw2008>

E-vote: NGO elections for Ministry of Environment and Water, for Ministry of Regional Development and for Bulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation.

ISOC and BlueLink developed a small project on **data retention**.

October 2008

Izmir – **Training** course "Creating right atmosphere for the future" held from "Youth in Action".

BlueLink in Dnevnik Newspaper about **data retention**: <http://bit.ly/bpJJQe>

online activists do not need BlueLink competence in this area, they adopt for their mission to work online for better world and say it aloud. We strive to provide resources to people who use them without been experts, finish their work and continue on.

Dichev consulted "Save the forest" and participated in the project as trainer. With his support the system began to bear fruit - the field visits were combined with effective checks by the au-



Konstantin Dichev as trainer in "Save the Forest". Photo: Doroteya Marinova

thorities. And when Dichev with the foresters analyzed the situation in front of dozens cameras of curious citizens, the results were different - real and transparent.

Good luck and success to Konstantine.

RECOGNITION

November 2008

BlueLink and PECSD prepared public survey about the spending of **EU funds** in Bulgaria.

December 2008

Sofia – BlueLink presented its **projects and activities** at "Days of Challenge" – a social, sport and green event of "Mountains and People" Association.

January 2009

Varna – Partnership meeting part of SF team project to draft a methodology for NGOs to **monitor the sustainability of projects**, financed by EU in Bulgaria.

BlueLink submitted a project proposal, together with CVS Bulgaria, for elaboration of **voluntaries' database** in Bulgaria.

February 2009

Sofia – BlueLink co-organized a **NGO training**: "Networking, partnerships and awareness raising". We conducted workshop on: Virtual networks, Web 2.0, Data retention, Work with media to raise public awareness.

Sofia – BlueLink continues its **support to the Sofia University** Biology Faculty. Few enthusiasts have compiled a small library with materials and publications for students of Biology. BlueLink has donated more than 300 periodicals and books in its aim to contribute to the conservation goals of the faculty.

GREENING IT

As an e-network of Bulgaria's environmental NGOs BlueLink has been active in promoting the use of ICTs for environmental sustainability as part of APC's activities and gave impetus to creating GreeningIT (www.greeningit.org created in 2007). A 2006-2007 concept paper by BlueLink and other APC members (http://ictpolworkshop.gn.apc.org/wiki/images/d/d3/IT_Env_discussion_paper5.doc) has determined that not only should ITs be developed and disposed of in a nature-friendly manner, but they can be actively promoted and developed for causes that contribute to nature-protection.

BlueLink is looking to support APC in further developing research and implementation of ICT tools to empower active citizenship for environmental

change. A recent pioneering example in this field is BlueLink's platform for online submission of alerts on illegal logging by citizens.

Greening IT event on 11 October 2007: Europe's way to an environmentally sustainable information society

Individual activists and organisations joined an online discussion on the potential of information technology for environmental sustainability.

APC, the global civil society network promoting information technology for social change, BlueLink Bulgaria, and Ekoforum Serbia produced a live online talk show from Belgrade in partnership with the UNECE Aarhus Convention



March 2009

BlueLink officially announced the start of "Spasi gorata" – an **online system for filing whistleblowers' alerts for illegal logging**, mobilizing active citizens' to use the system and ensuring follow-up by expert NGOs and officials of the State Forestry Agency.

Sofia – Discussion of the Bulgarian Center for Nonprofit Law on a project for building **effective cooperation** between civil organizations and public administration.

April 2009

Sofia – Meeting with the Access to Information Program for cooperation in the development of the Bulgarian part of the **Global Information Society report 2009**.

Sofia – BlueLink signed an agreement for participation in project "**Development education**".

Sofia – Open discussion of civil groups and active citizens about the development of new **civil mechanisms for social change** and the coordinated use of existing ones.



Secretariat. Streamed over the internet via APC's global network of members, people from around the world were



IT - Part of the Environment. Mois Moshev (monomon.me)

able to watch this interactive broadcast on the relationship between environmental sustainability and information technology (IT). During the event, representatives from civil society, govern-

ment and business shared success stories and lessons learned, and engage in dialog about how to bridge the paradigm and policy gap between IT and environmental stewardship.

Current challenges

In 2009 BlueLink participated in the elaboration of APCs work plan for greening IT network. The objective is to provide a medium-term direction for the development of the nascent Greening IT network. For BlueLink

the project is important possibility to emphasize our interest not only in e-waste and information campaigning, but in developing and promoting the use of ICT for environmental causes.

June 2009

E-vote: launching of NGO voting procedure for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

Sofia – **Meetings with civil coalitions** BeLENE! and EU Funds – role and commitments of BlueLink.

August 2009

BlueLink – **Social Innovation camp** Ambassador for Bulgaria.

October 2009

Online trainings on project activities for Greening IT – APC project.

November 2009

The prototype of a **database** of CVS is ready.

Sofia – **Partnership of "Save the forest"** with mountain guides school of association "Mountains and People".

Sofia – Meeting for joint activities, based on "**pro bono**" principle, with representatives of the Bulgarian Lawyers for Human Rights.

December 2009

Sofia – Press conference and a promotional event in the Czech cultural center for the end of first phase of "**Save the forest**" campaign.

Income Statement

INCOME	2008	2009
Grants	310	190
Donations	4	5
Bank interest and bank transactions	0	0
Commercial activities	1	0
Excess of expenses over income	0	0
TOTAL INCOME	315	195

EXPENDITURE	2008	2009
Project expenses	304	179
Administration costs	10	10
Bank charges and currency conversion	1	1
Commercial activities	0	5
Excess of income over expenses	0	0
TOTAL INCOME	315	195

Balance Sheet

ASSETS	2008	2009
Long term assets	0	0
Equipment	5	4
Accounts receivable	30	6
Cash and bank deposits	119	48
TOTAL ASSETS	154	58

LIABILITIES	2008	2009
Reserve	38	38
Current result	0	5
Liabilities - staff & contractors	1	2
Grants to be spent	115	13
TOTAL LIABILITIES	154	58

Donors and Supporters

To continue operating, BlueLink relies on contributions from its users, committed donors, and all other individuals and organizations interested in empowering civil society to use the ICT for active citizen participation for democracy and environmental sustainability. If you are interested in our activities and services, or if you want to implement a cooperative project, become intern, or make a donation, please contact us at: office [at] bluelink [dot] net

Bank account: IBAN

Thank you for making BlueLink possible!

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

Association of Progressive Communications
 Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
 European Commission
 Milieukontakt Oost-Europa
 United Nations Development Programme
 Balkan Trust for Democracy
 Small Grants Programme of the Global Environment Facility
 European Economic Area
 CEE Trust
 ISOC
 Bulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation

This Financial Statement was compiled and translated according to National Accounting Standards of Bulgaria. All the figures in the Financial Statement are in thousands Bulgarian leva.



In November 2008, Balkan Trust for Democracy awarded a grant to BlueLink's proposal "Expose and Improve: the power of IT in combating illegal logging", aiming to address the problem of intensive illegal logging and accelerated extinction of forests. The project supports sustainable governance of Bulgarian forests by developing an online system for filing whistleblowers' alerts for illegal logging, mobilising active citizens' to use the system and ensuring follow-up by expert NGOs and officials of the State Forestry Agency (SFA). The platform started receiving signals in 2009 via <http://www.spasigorata.net/>. Alerts can be received in text or graphic format, via e-mail, web interface or SMS, and, after validation, each case is automatically displayed on a digital map.



The campaign to raise public awareness and engagement about the issues of environment and health posed by persistent organic pollutants (POPs) is called "POP - the unknown threat".

The insufficient knowledge on persistent pollutants and their impact on human health leads to unintentional generation of hazardous substances during their combustion and very few people realize that. The campaign is focused on the unintentional POPs discharges, which often result from combustion of plastics, tyres, stubbles.

ABOUT BLUELINK

The Mission

BlueLink is an information network which encourages the usage of ICT for an active civil society and environmental sustainability.

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 Zemjata" ("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), active civil groups and individuals interested in the issues of nature protection and strong civil society. Media, academic institutions, municipal and state authorities also benefit from BlueLink's services.

Our goal is to improve the effectiveness of civil society organizations by fostering collaboration between them.

Services:

- BlueLink's Civil Gateway to Bulgaria at <http://www.bluelink.net> contains comprehensive information about civil action, nature protection and use of ICT for a better relation between the State and their citizens in Bulgaria
- BlueLink offers strategic online services for NGOs and individuals, including content and information exchange tools, data bases and instruments for digital campaigns
- BlueLink organizes training workshops for NGOs in online collaboration and communication, online campaigning, information management
- BlueLink facilitates the platform and process by which NGOs are nominated and elected to Bulgarian Government working groups and committees.

BlueLink Information Network

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