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The project “Interpretative Trails on the Ground - Support to the Management of Natural Protected Areas in the Black Sea Region (InterTrails)” is funded by the European Union through the Joint Operational Programme “Black Sea Basin 2007 - 2013”

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INTERPRETATIVE TRAILS IN PROTECTED AREAS

Project of non-governmental organizations from five Black Sea countries will contribute to the improvement of management of protected territories and the establishment of regional network

The Black Sea NGO Network of Varna, Bulgaria together with partners from four other Black Sea countries has begun the implementation of the project “Interpretative Trails on the Ground - Support to the Management of Natural Protected Areas in the Black Sea Region (InterTrails)”, which is funded by the European Union through the Joint Operational Programme “Black Sea Basin 2007 - 2013”. The project includes activities associated with management and conservation of protected territories on regional scale. Its start is a good opportunity to remind the public of the coming International Black Sea Day that will be celebrated for the fifteenth time on October 31 this year and also of the fact that the protection of the marine environment and the coast remain one of the principal regional challenges. The project envisages the establishment of interpretative trails in nature reserves, parks and other protected territories, the description of valuable natural, geographical and cultural assets along the route, training, and exchange of expertise and good practices on national and regional level, as well as public awareness activities and involvement of local communities. The project can become a stepping stone to the creation of regional network of protected territories.

The participants in the project are five non-governmental organizations from the Black Sea basin. Beneficiary is the Black Sea NGO Network (bsnn@bsnn.org www.bsnn.org) and the partners are NGO Mare Nostrum, Constanta Romania, the Black Sa Branch of the Ukrainian Environmental Academy of Science, the Foundation for Sustainable Development of Cahul, Moldova and the Black Sea EcoAcademy of Batumi, Georgia. The length of the project is two years and its total cost is 396 912.00 euros.

The project *aims* toward stimulating the growth and development of awareness, understanding and consciousness toward the coastal environment and its problems, including human interactions and effects. It can also help people in the regional communities to start thinking "ecologically" or in terms of an



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ecological consciousness and utilize better the opportunities for protecting biodiversity through management of protected areas.

The project idea is centered round *introducing awareness raising activities* in parks of nature or protected areas (depending on the specific conditions in the respective country) that can contribute to the sustainable management of the protected territory as well.

The *focus* of the project is devising and creating the so called *interpretative trails*. The meaning of the name given to the trails implies that the ordinary visitors to the parks need to have the significance of nature explained, interpreted to them. The trails are routes inside the park which comprise nature landmarks and specific items of interest to be shown and their significance explained to the visitors. Those can include plant and tree species specific to the region or the area. If there are endangered species of plant and animal life, they can also be included in the trail. Explanations about habitats, voices of birds, footsteps and traces of animals can also form part of the 'interpretation'. Each trail can include 30 to 40 points to be addressed in the interpretative explanation. It can be delivered in foreign languages as well depending on the interest to the trail. The Black Sea NGOs comprise leading professionals and ecological, environmental and public communication experts, and they have knowledge gained through participation in Black Sea environmental researches, including the spheres of management of protected areas and local environmental sustainable development.

The Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme (Black Sea JOP) is one of the EU operational programmes under the European Neighbourhood & Partnership Instrument (ENPI). It is implemented during the programming period 2007 - 2013. It aims to contribute to: "a stronger and sustainable economic and social development of the regions of the Black Sea Basin". The programme's three specific objectives, are:

- Promoting economic and social development in the border areas
- Working together to address common challenges
- Promoting local, people-to-people cooperation

For more information: <http://www.blacksea-cbc.net/>

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