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“Fuqizimi i Organizatave Mjedisore të Shoqërisë Civile për të promovuar mbrojtjen e natyrës në Shqipëri”

PIRIN NATIONAL PARK – ADVOCACY TO SAVE ITS OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

Hotel MONDIAL
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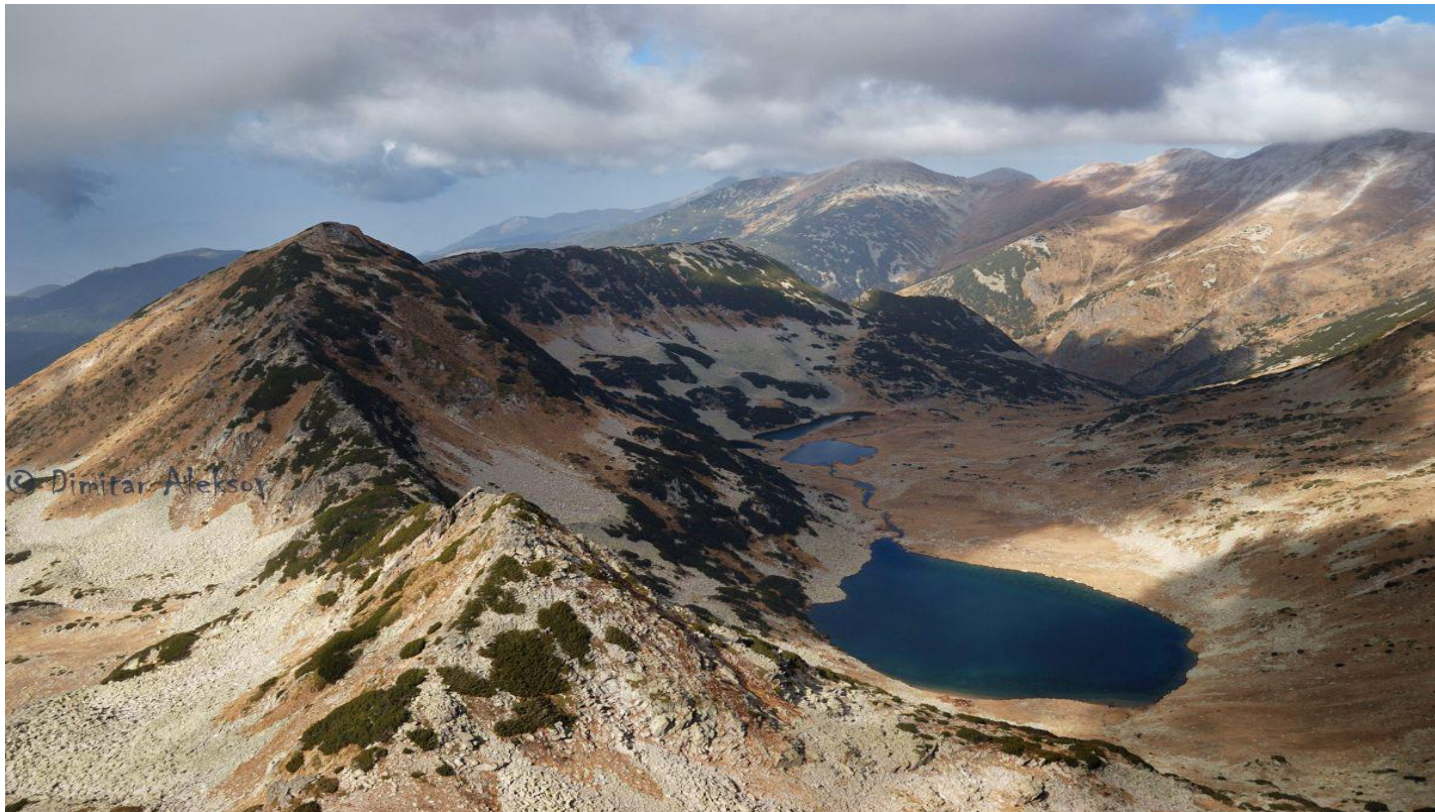




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Empower Environmental Civil
Society Organizations to promote
nature protection in Albania



- IUCN category II national park since 1962
- UNESCO world natural heritage site since 1983
- Natura 2000 site under both EU nature conservation directives since 2008





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UNESCO criteria

- mountain scenery of **exceptional beauty**
- **glacial geomorphology**, over 70 glacial lakes.
- **continuing evolution of flora**, as evidenced by a number of endemic and relict species, and a **functioning ecosystem** of the Balkan uplands





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Endemic plant species - 20 local (only in Pirin); 46 Bulgarian and 156 Balkan.

Vertebrate fauna - 6 fish species, 18 amphibians and reptiles, 152 birds and 43 mammals.

Endangered and rare animals
Brown bear, Wolf, Pine marten, Balkan Chamois, Golden Eagle, Capercaillie, Peregrine falcon, Rock partridge, Hazel grouse etc.





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The oldest pine tree in Bulgaria.

1300 years old *Pinus
heldreichii*, Bosnian pine.





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2000 Envi ministry allowed the extension of the Bansko Ski – zone. The signed a concession contract with a private company to build the ski zone.

2004 adopted the Pirin National Park management plan, 0.6% is a zone for buildings and facilities for the allowed ski runs and lifts.

2010 Envi ministry found out that the concessioner uses 160 ha instead of 99.55 ha, or about 60% more.



History of the problems





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2010 the Pirin WH property was extended to include the whole of the Pirin National Park and the two ski zones were excluded from the property.

“Regrets that the Outstanding Universal Value of the property has been repeatedly and significantly impacted by the development of ski facilities and ski runs, to the extent that the property may be considered for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger, and that continued ski development is a critical threat to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property;”

The “Buffer zones” are part of the national park and the Natura 2000 sites.

2014 scientific data of the **impact of the existing ski runs on key conservation species** around main tourist zones in terms of reduction of the quality of habitats of the bear, wolf, chamois and capercaillie.

History of the problems





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Socio – economic aspects (1)

- population reduction
- decrease of property value
- seasonality of employment
- continuous state subsidizing





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Socio – economic aspects (2)

- water supply and sewage projects in Bansko cost over €30 million from EU Funds
- state subsidies for the world ski cups:
 - 2002-2016 the concessioner paid of BGN 2,673 million fee .
 - 2012 only Yulen received from the Ski Federation for renting the ski runs in BGN 2,71 million for just one year!

If the economic model of Bansko was so successful, it would not be necessary for Bulgarian and European taxpayers to constantly invest in the municipality of Bansko.





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- construction on an area 12.5 times larger than the original man. plan
- commercial logging can happen on almost 60% of the park
- extension of grazing in terms of areas and intensity
- 2016 the **ministry's request for revision of zoning** and regimes was **rejected** by the authors
- 2017 a screening decision **not to do** strategic environmental **assessment** and appropriate assessment
- 2017 **IUCN World Heritage Outlook 2, assessment of Pirin National Park – significant concern** because of the new draft management plan proposing extension of zones with potential ski development
- 2018 – a court case against the screening decision, so the draft plan is not adopted yet

Current threats - draft management plan from 2014





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Current threats - Amendments to the current management plan adopted 2017

- Changes to the management plan affect 3 management zones of the park or half of the park:
 - (zone for buildings and facilities (0.6%),
 - zone for tourism (2.2%)
 - zone for conservation of forest ecosystems and recreation (45.2%).
- Ski runs and ski facilities are specifically mentioned for the first two zones, or five times more than currently allowed
- In addition they allow construction in the third zone, which publicly is explained as for “water catchments”.





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Current threats - Amendments to the current management plan adopted 2017

- Violations of Protected Areas Act:
 - only allows reconstruction of ski facilities but not construction of new ones,
 - allows water catchments for drinking water only,
 - and the decision says just “water catchments”.
- Not even screening for the need of Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment (AA) → violations of the Environmental Protection Act and the Biodiversity Act
- The decision taken without any socio – economic analysis or justification



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Planning the strategy

**Question: What do we want to achieve a result of this campaign.
What is the goal of the campaign?**

Goals in the Pirin case:

- Reject amendments to the current management plan which envisage new construction of ski facilities on an area five times large than currently allowed in the national park
- Reject the draft management plan on an area twelve times large than currently allowed in the national park



Planning the strategy

How to achieve our goals?

key ingredients:
advocacy work and communication
campaign

no success unless you involve both
methods!

communication campaign aims to put
pressure on institutions to do what you
have asked them to do through your
advocacy work



How to design the advocacy campaign (1)

Question to ask: Who is the responsible institution?

In the Pirin case these were:

On a **national level**: The Council of Ministers, who made the decision and the Supreme Administrative Court where we could appeal the decision; the Ministry of the Environment for the decision not to do Strategic Environmental Assessment of the draft Management Plan

On **EU level**: Directorate General Environment (because of its status as a Natura 2000 site, part of the European Ecological network)

On **UNESCO level**: World Heritage Centre and IUCN as an advisor body to the WHC (because of its status of a UNESCO world natural heritage site)



How to design the advocacy campaign (2)

Questions to ask: What is the procedure now according to the legislation? What steps need to be taken.

In the Pirin case these were:

- Appeal the decision of the ministry not to do SEA of the new draft plan before the court
- Appeal the decision of the Council of Ministries to amend the current management plan
- Inform IUCN and the WHC on what is going on
- Inform the EC



How to design the advocacy campaign (3)

Your actions need to be very well targeted to exactly the **right institutions** in the **right time** of the procedure.

Questions to ask:

What is the next step in the procedure,
What we, as civil society can do about it

In the Pirin case these were:

Ask the institutions to reject their decision

As they did not reject their decision – we submitted an appeal in court.

Targeted a petition to the Prime Minister who could end up the whole case



How to design the communication campaign

- plan resources for communication expert
- work with the national media
- work with international media
- work with supporters
- plan events
- plan a petition
- plan production of visuals (videos, infographics etc)
- if necessary, organise street protests



Main actions in a successful communication campaign

- place information on the problem on a web site, spread it out through social networks
- regular press releases informing about the development of the case
- translate key press releases into English and try to find international partners to take it up to international media
- develop a petition targeted at the institution/person who can solve the problem
- produce a catchy video, which explains your problem in a simple message and which leads to your petition





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People power in support of the park

a street protest in the centre of the capital Sofia in front of the Council of Ministers, January 2018





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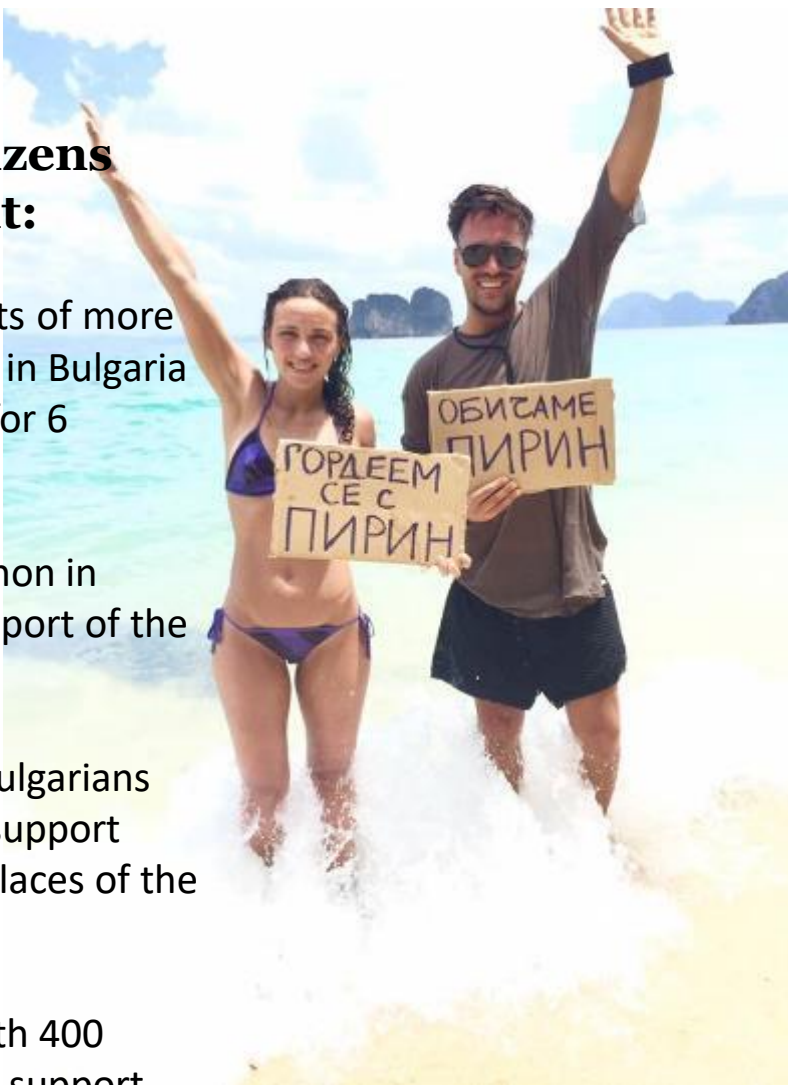


European Environmental Civil Society



Massive citizens involvement:

- Weekly protests of more than 30 towns in Bulgaria and abroad - for 6 months
- 400 km marathon in Bulgaria in support of the camping
- Hundreds of Bulgarians showed their support from various places of the planet
- 400 people with 400 words showed support with a poem for nature



Our success

- The Supreme Administrative Court of Bulgaria in a final ruling said that it is illegal to build new sport facilities in national parks in its final decision from January 2019
- The Supreme Administrative Court, first instance ruled that the new draft management plan needs to have Strategic Environmental Assessment
- We have won a battle, keep your fingers crossed so that we win the war!





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Thank you!

