



Coastal protected areas and historical sites in North Bulgaria – Challenges, mismanagement and future perspectives



Margarita Stancheva^{a, *}, Hristo Stanchev^a, Preslav Peev^a, Giorgio Anfuso^b,
Allan Thomas Williams^{c, d}

^a Institute of Oceanology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Varna, 9000, Bulgaria

^b Faculty of Marine Science, University of Cadiz, Cadiz, 11510, Puerto Real, Spain

^c Faculty of Architecture, Computing and Engineering, University of Wales: Trinity Saint David (Swansea), SA1 6ED, Mount Pleasant, Swansea, Wales, United Kingdom

^d CICS NOVA, Nova Universidade de Lisboa, Lisboa, Portugal

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ABSTRACT

Coastal protected areas and historical heritage sites in Bulgaria are established by national policy instruments/laws and EU Directives to protect a wide range of natural and cultural resources. This paper demonstrated the development of a detailed inventory based on GIS tools which is able to document a variety of protected areas and heritage sites along the North Bulgarian Black Sea coast with a landward extended zone 2100 m in width. The strip zone area is 182.6 km² and *circa* 67% has different protection status both for natural and historical heritage. Analysis concerned compliance of national and IUCN categorisation of coastal protected areas in North Bulgaria and the degree of spatial overlapping and complementarities between nationally designated sites and Natura 2000 areas. The greatest natural and human related challenges were considered for both protected areas and historical sites, *i.e.* impact of tourism, management conservation issues and perspectives for future development (ecotourism). Results help in providing the key issues of conservation value and proper visitation management, to managers of coastal protected areas, tourism operators, developers and visitors on, leading towards a goal of environmental, social and economic sustainability.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Protected areas: general aspects

Most countries in the world have already established terrestrial or marine protected areas, which often present added significant cultural and historical values under some form of legal protection. The number of protected areas has continued an upward trend since the 1960s, when they represented only c. 1.5% of the earth's surface, currently >12% is under some type of legal protection (Lausche, 2011).

In Europe, protected areas have been established under the Natura 2000 and Emerald networks with the aim of coherently protecting species and natural habitats across national borders. These networks complement nationally designated protected areas

to make up a combined protected area of 1,092,529 km², or 25% of Europe's land and inland waters. Marine protected areas, which include additional international designations, cover more than 340,000 km² or 6% of Europe's regional seas (EEA, 2012). The Natura 2000 network is further described in Subsection 1.2 and Table 1.

Protected areas are defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) date as, “clearly defined geographical spaces, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values” (Leung et al., 2015, page 24). Furthermore, the foundations for Earth life and natural habitats and landscape diversity are provided by geodiversity. “Geodiversity is the variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, sediments and soils, together with the natural processes which form and alter them”. Thus, many protected areas contain also important geodiversity and some protected areas are designated primarily for their geodiversity values. Geodiversity is included under the term “nature conservation” in the IUCN's definition of a protected area (Dudley,

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: stancheva@io-bas.bg, kolevamargarita@yahoo.co.uk (M. Stancheva).

Table 1
National, EU and international legislation.

National legislation		
Biological diversity Act	Promulgated in State Gazette 77/2002, last amended by State Gazette no. 62/14.08.2015	Aims to: conservation of natural habitat types representative of Bulgaria and Europe and habitats of endangered, rare and endemic plant and animal species within a national Ecological network; conservation of the protected plant and animal species of the flora and fauna of Bulgaria
Protected Areas Act	Promulgated in State Gazette 133/1998, last amended by State Gazette No. 61/11.08.2015	Aims to conserve and preserve protected areas as a national and universal human wealth and asset a special form of conservation of Bulgarian nature, conducive to the advancement of culture, science and public welfare. The next categories of protection, concerning forests, lands and waters, are defined under this Act: 1. strict nature reserve; 2. national park; 3. natural monument; 4. managed nature reserve; 5. natural park; 6. protected site;
Environment Protection Act	Promulgated in State Gazette 91/2002, last amended by State Gazette No. 62/14.08.2015	Aims to: regulate the social relations with regard to protection of the environment for the present and future generations and protection of human health. This includes regulation of the regimes of conservation and use of environment; control over the status and use of environment and of the sources of potential pollution and damage; environment management and of environmental factors; environmental impact assessment (EIA); designation and management of areas placed under a special regime of protection etc.
Cultural Heritage Act	Promulgated in State Gazette 19/2009, last amended by State Gazette No. 98/28.11.2014	Aims to: regulate the preservation and protection of the cultural heritage of Bulgaria. Cultural heritage encompasses intangible and tangible immovable and movable heritage as an aggregate of cultural values which bear historical memory and national identity and have their own academic or cultural value.
Black Sea Coastal Development Act	Promulgated in State Gazette 48/2007, last amended by State Gazette 61/11.08.2015	Aims to: creation of conditions for protection, sustained integrated progress and development of the Black Sea coast; ensuring free public access to seashore; protection, preservation and rational use of natural resources; prevention and reduction of pollution; protection of the seashore from erosion and landslides; and protection of natural landscape as well as of cultural and historical heritage. Two protected zones “A” and “B” are legally regulated in coastal areas.
Tourism Act	Promulgated in State Gazette 30/2013, last amended by State Gazette No. 14/20.02.2015	Aims to: regulate the social relations associated with the implementation of governance and control in tourism, the interaction of the State and municipalities in the implementation of activities related to tourism.
EU and international legislation		
Natura 2000 EU Network (Commission Working Document on Natura, 2000, 2002)	Consists of: - Special Areas of Conservation (SAC under 1992 Habitats Directive and having the basic sites of community importance (SCI); - Special Protection Areas (SPA) under 1972 Birds Directive	Aims to: building a network of sites across Europe on the basis of a common methodology, criteria and set of ecological features favours better ecological coherence than if the networks were only organised within each Member State (EEA, 2012).
Habitats Directive	Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora	Aims to: promoting the maintenance of biodiversity by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species listed on the Annexes to the Directive at a favourable conservation status, introducing robust protection for those habitats and species of European importance.
Birds Directive	Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (first adopted in 1979)	Aims to: provides a comprehensive framework for the protection, management and control of all wild birds naturally occurring in the EU.
Emerald Network	Consists of: Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) set up by the Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention — the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats.	The Emerald Network, which applies a Natura 2000-like approach to other countries beyond the EU, is still in its initial phase (EEA, 2012).
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 1992)	Entered into law on 29 December 1993	Aims to: - To conserve biological diversity; - To use biological diversity in a sustainable way; - To share the benefits of biological diversity fairly and equitably.
The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage	Signed in Paris on November 16, 1972 (entered into law in 1975)	Aims to: conserve a collection of the world's timeless treasures.
Ramsar Convention on wetlands	Signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971	Aims to: provide a framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

2008, page 66).

Therefore, protected areas are fundamental in safeguarding species and habitats, ecological systems, geodiversity and landscapes, and improving the stewardship of natural resources in defined sites and areas (Crofts and Phillips, 2013). Coastal protected and heritage areas help preserve and therefore avoid further

degradation of important natural resources, habitats and ecosystems, e.g. sand dunes, beaches, wetlands, rare plants and birds, etc. together with preservation of sites with cultural and historical significance alongside geodiversity and biodiversity conservation and their sustainable usage. Such areas with protected status also provide numerous benefits for local economies and environments

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