

Environmental aspects for conservation of the natural areas - trends and perspectives - A review

*Dimo Hadzhiev**

University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski", Faculty of Law, Department of Civil Law, 24 Tzar Asen Str., Plovdiv 4000, BULGARIA

*Corresponding author: dimo_hadzhiev@uni-plovdiv.bg

Abstract. The need for this review is due to the fact that in recent decades there is a tendency towards an increasing depletion of biological diversity on a global scale, including within a scope of the natural areas, due to various factors. This review is intended to provide an overview of these factors and existing opinions of some authors on the topic of article, as well as to examine the trend in the conservation of the natural areas in view of some applicable national and European acts. There will also be a review of international multilateral treaties with direct impact on the conservation of the natural areas, in which the Republic of Bulgaria participates. In the view of the perspectives for conservation of the natural areas, some conclusion and recommendation will be made in this review.

Key words: natural areas, environmental law, biological diversity, environmental conservation.

Introduction

According to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP, <https://www.unep.org/>) in recent decades there is a tendency towards an increasing depletion of biological diversity on a global scale, including within a scope of the natural areas, due to various factors of demographic and economic nature, as about a quarter of the species of wild flora and fauna are threatened with extinction and destruction, mainly due to habitat destruction (Shelton & Kiss, 2005), overexploitation and environmental pollution (Yancheva et al., 2023; Ilieva, 2020). Other significant factors are climate change (Owen, 2018), low biotic potential, limited area habitat, genetic assimilation, maladaptive behavior, trade in domesticated animals, important of exotic species, special food, direct human extinction and pesticide use, illegal use of nature, the intensive development of tourism, population growth (Gillespie, 2007). The conser-

vation of nature, respectively the environment, including the natural areas, is of primary importance for solving the environmental problems that have arisen, related to the danger to the normal existence of every living organism, which should not be underestimated.

The processes, arising from man's intervention in the environment, have no limits, wherefore the main question may reasonably be asked for the preservation of man as a biological species. Ludwig Cremer (2008) states that the environment can survive without human beings, but they cannot survive without it. Realizing this danger has been imposed by states' regulation of society-nature relations and the creation of new institutional forms of natural area's conservation (Hristova, 2022).

Anthropogenic impact on the environment is the basis of ecological problems, therefore the efforts of every society should be directed towards building a high ecological culture. An

important means of achieving this aim is the law that, through the relevant provisions, should ensure an ecological interaction between society and nature. The natural areas are a special form of environmental conservation provided for in legal norms. The role of law in this aspect finds a reflection in some applicable acts of national legislation, European Union law, and it is necessary to implement international cooperation for conservation of the natural areas.

The aim of this review is to indicate the measures for conservation of the natural areas under national legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Materials and Methods

The natural areas occupy 5.27% of the Republic of Bulgaria's territory, and in addition, they are 1016 (Penchev, 2021a). Globally, the area they are 4.9% of the terrestrial part of planet and there is also a tendency towards the increase (Penchev, 2021a).

In this article, the following research methods are used for the analysis of the natural areas: historical, comparative, critical-analytical, normative, logical, abstract and inductive.

The conservation of the natural areas under the national legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria

The main purpose of the natural areas' separation is to limit the negative anthropogenic impact in them in order to preserve nature to a greater extent (Penchev, 2021a). This view is supported by the provision of Article 4, paragraph 1 of Protected Areas Act (1998) where it is pointed out that their purpose is to protect biological diversity in ecosystems and natural processes taking place in them, as well as characteristic or remarkable object of the inanimate nature and landscapes. The conservation of the natural areas could be considered as a legally regulated activity aimed at restoring, preserving, improving and preventing the degradation, above all, of natural ecosystems, plant and animal species and objects of non-living nature within the boundaries of these areas (Hristova, 2021).

In accordance with Protected Areas Act, biological diversity is the diversity of living organisms from all sources, including land, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and ecological complexes of which they are part. This

means intraspecific, interspecific and ecosystem diversity.

In addition, I think that the name of Protected Areas Act (1998) was not chosen successfully, because it does not emphasize the type of areas that are object to conservation, namely that is natural and not another type of areas. From this point of view, it would be better if the name of this act read "Protected Natural Areas Act" (Penchev, 2023; Hristova, 2018).

Article 5 of Protected Areas Act specifies 6 categories of characteristic natural areas, as follows: natural remarkability, national parks, natural parks, reserves, maintained reserves and protected areas. In order to outline the means for conservation of the natural areas, their features must first be indicated.

1. Each category of the natural areas is a specially regulated form of law for the conservation of local natural environment.

2. The natural areas include lands, forests and water areas.

3. For the natural areas as an object of law, in particular administrative legal regime, rules for their announcement, preservation, use, financing and conservation are established by the legislator.

4. Construction is taking place in the natural areas, maintenance and use of objects in accordance with the regime of the activities, established according to the order of Protected Areas Act with the orders for announcement and with plans for their management, structural and technical plans and project.

5. All subjects, except those specified in Article 10, paragraphs 2 and 5 of Protected Areas Act, can acquire forests, lands and water areas in the natural areas with legal transaction, constitutive judgement (Hadzhiev, 2022) or in another legal acquiring method. Disposal transactions with real estate in lands where there are the natural areas are carried out after submission of a written declaration by the transferor whether the property falls within protected area. Purchasers of properties declare at the transfer that they are familiar with the regime of activities in the protected area. Purchasers of properties notify the regional bodies of Ministry of environment and waters about the change of ownership within 14 days of acquiring the right of ownership.

6. Establishing public and private ownership of the natural areas. Parks with national signifi-

cance, specified in Appendix 1 of Protected Areas Act and nature reserves, specified in Appendix 2 of Protected Areas Act, which serve to satisfy public needs of national significance, are exclusive state property, and in the other categories of the natural areas, there can be any type of property.

7. In order to guarantee the compliance with the administrative norms, the source of the regime of the natural areas, and above all for the conservation and preservation of these areas, the measures of administrative coercion provided for in the law are applied – coercive administrative measures and administrative penalties.

It can be mentioned the following legal measures for conservation of the natural areas under the Protected Areas Act:

A) right of the Minister of environment and waters to categorize and promulgate specific natural areas with Order, published in “State Gazette of the Republic of Bulgaria” - Articles 35 and Article 47, point 2 after special procedure for this promulgation (Articles 36-45);

B) adoption of management plans for these areas by the Government – on national and natural parks, and by the Minister of environment and waters – on reserves, maintained reserves, protected areas and natural remarkability (Article 60, paragraph 1 and Article 61) after special procedure for this adoption (Articles 55-66) (Penchev, 2013);

C) special rules on the legal characterization and regime of activities in specially the natural areas (Articles 16-34). In other acts are also known legal measures for conservation of the natural areas.

Legal measures under Biological Diversity Act (2002) are: establishment of special rules, related to construction and operation of the “National Ecological Network” for conservation of biological diversity (Articles 3-34); special rules, related to the conservation of wild plants and animals (Articles 35-69).

Legal measures under Forestry Act (2011) are: categorization of forest areas (Article 5); forest planning (Articles 9-19) and establishment of special rules, related to conservation of the natural areas.

Legal measures under Environmental Protection Act (2002) are:

1. Environmental assessment (Articles 81-91);

2. Environmental impact assessment (Articles 81-83 and Articles 92-102);

3. Establishment of general rules for the conservation of biodiversity (Articles 51-54);

4. Right to a National Environmental Monitoring System (Articles 143-147);

5. Right to an information about the environment (Articles 17-31);

6. Right to a National Trust Ecofund (Articles 66-68);

7. Right to an enterprise to manage environmental conservation activities (Article 60-64);

8. Development and approval of strategies and programs for environmental conservation (Articles 75-80);

9. Right to a National Scheme for Environmental Management and Auditing (Articles 132-136 and Article 142);

10. Right to a National Ecolabel Scheme (Article 132 and Articles 137-142);

11. Imposition of coercive administrative measures (Articles 158-161).

International multilateral agreements with direct impact on the conservation of the natural areas, in which the Republic of Bulgaria participates.

International cooperation for conservation of the natural areas is mainly determined by the following factors (Penchev, 2022): a) presence of natural resources under the jurisdiction of two or more countries; b) growing ecological dependence of countries on each other, due to the transboundary impacts of certain actions and activities carried out in a certain country on the state of the environment on the territory of other countries; c) natural resources and ecosystems are linked among themselves and do not recognize national borders.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Nature Resources through the World Commission on Protected Areas has made a significant contribution to the development of international cooperation in the conservation of the natural areas. Currently, there is still no international multilateral universal or regional contract with the participation of the Republic of Bulgaria to dedicated or regulate only legal regime of the natural areas. Therefore, two main groups of international multilateral agreements will be discussed below, that provide partial regulation

for conservation of the natural areas: a) international multilateral universal agreements with direct relevance to the conservation of the natural areas with the participation of the Republic of Bulgaria; and b) international multilateral regional agreements with direct relevance to the conservation of the natural areas with the participation of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Important international multilateral universal agreements with direct relevance to the conservation of the natural areas with the participation of the Republic of Bulgaria are Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar, Iran) (UNESCO, 1971) and Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris, France, 1972).

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) was approved by the Republic of Bulgaria with Decision of Ministry of Justice № 389 from 18.11.1974 (unpublished) and has been in force for the Republic of Bulgaria since 24.01.1976 and was promulgated.

The following legal measures for the conservation of wetlands can be indicated with of international importance as waterfowl habitats under Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar, Iran, 1971):

1. Providing for an obligation for participating countries in Convention to designate wetlands on their territory in order to include them in the “List of Wetlands of International meaning”, which is maintained by the Bureau of the Parties to the Convention, established by Article 8 of it, as the international importance of these areas is with a view to ecology, zoology, botany, hydrology or limnology (Article 2).

2. Establishing an obligation for these countries in the planning process to envisage conservation measures for wetlands included in the List and to inform the “Bureau” according to Article 8 for changes made to the “ecological nature” of these areas (Article 3).

3. Providing for an obligation for these countries to create “natural reserves” of wetlands, regardless of whether they appear on the List, and to ensure their conservation, as well as to promote specific research, personal training and

information exchange and, if possible, to increase the population waterfowl (Article 4).

4. Establishing an obligation for participating countries to consult with each other is in cases where a wetland extends beyond the territory of a country or a “water system” is shared by several countries (Article 5).

5. Providing a legal capacity for these countries, when necessary to protect the above-mentioned wetland, to convene conferences of the participating countries which have an advisory nature (Article 6).

6. Establishing an obligation for the same countries of the conferences under Article 6 to be represented by the experts on wetlands or waterfowl (Article 7).

In national legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria, the requirements of Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) are introduced with Protected Areas Act (1998), Biological Diversity Act (2002) and Environmental Protection Act (2002).

Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris, France, 1972) was concluded under the auspices of UNESCO. This convention was approved by the Republic of Bulgaria with Order of the Bureau of the Council Ministers № 13 from 04.02.1974 (unpublished) with reservation under Art. 16, paragraph 1. The reservation reads: “People’s Republic of Bulgaria shall not be considered by the provisions of Article 16, paragraph 1 of Convention”. This convention is in force for the Republic of Bulgaria from 17.12.1975 and was promulgated in State Gazette № 44 from 27.05.2005.

The following legal measures for conservation of world cultural and natural heritage under Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris, France, 1972):

1. Providing for an obligation for participating countries to define and distinguish the different types of objects, located on their territory, specified in Article 1 and 2 (Article 3).

2. Establishing of special rules to organization of the nation and the international protection of the world cultural and natural heritage (Articles 4-7).

3. Establishing of special rules concerning the Intergovernmental Committee for world heritage as the governing body of the parties to the Convention, as well as other authorities of the participating countries (Articles 8-14).

4. Providing for special rules, relating to the Fund for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Articles 15-18).

5. Establishing of special rules regarding the conditions and ways to rendering of international aid (Articles 19-26).

6. Establishing of special rules to education programs (Articles 27 and 28).

In national legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria, the requirements of Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris, France, 1972) are introduced by the Protected Areas Act (1998), Cultural Heritage Act (2009) and Environmental Protection Act (2002).

International regional multilateral agreement with direct relevance to conservation of the natural areas with the participation of the Republic of Bulgaria is The European Landscape Convention (Florence, Italy, 2000). This convention was concluded under the auspices of the Council of Europe and she is ratified by the Republic of Bulgaria by The European Landscape Convention ratification Act from 13.10.2004 (State Gazette № 94 from 2004). This convention is in force for the Republic of Bulgaria from 01.03.2005 and was promulgated in State Gazette № 22 from 15.03.2005.

The following legal measures for landscape conservation under The European Landscape Convention (Florence, Italy, 2000) can be mentioned:

1. Establishing of special rules, relating to national measures of the landscape (Articles 4-6).

2. Establishing of special rules, regarding European cooperation on landscape conservation (Articles 7-11).

3. A legal option for participating countries to introduce into their legislation stricter landscape conservation measure, included in view of their participation in international agreements, from those under the Convention (Article 1).

In national legislation of the Republic of Bulgaria, the requirements of The European Landscape Convention (Florence, Italy, 2000) are introduced by the Protected Areas Act (1998), Environmental Protection Act (2002), Spatial Development Act (2001) and etc.

Priorities for future research and recommended approaches

Too many amendments and additions to the Protected Areas Act reduce its effectiveness. For example, for the period 1998-2020, this act was amended and supplemented over 25 times.

It is necessary to consider the need to develop an entirely new one „Protected Natural Areas Act” with the participation of practicing specialists – ecologists and scientists with a view to rethinking the categories and ownership of the natural areas.

There is no provision in the Protected Areas Act to list the principles that must be followed to guide the competent authorities in the Republic of Bulgaria in their activities for conservation of the natural areas. This fact creates the impression that the importance of legal principles is underestimated. This is main reason for amending Protected Areas Act in this direction.

Currently, there is still no international multilateral universal or regional contract with the participation of the Republic of Bulgaria to dedicate or regulate only legal regime of the natural areas.

There are no provisions in the examined international agreements to list the principles that must be followed to guide the participating countries in their activities to implement the relevant international agreement.

The commented international agreements lack a provision regarding the manner of resolving disputes regarding their interpretation and application.

The conservation of the natural areas under some applicable acts of the legislation of the European Union with an optional nature for Member States

In this review, some applicable acts of the legislation of the European Union for conservation of the natural areas with an optional nature for Member States will be considered. In this regard, will be commented measures for conservation of the natural areas under Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 of the conservation of wild birds. The applicable acts for conservation of the natural areas of the legislation of the European Union with a mandatory nature

for Member States, remain outside the article. More about some of applicable regulations can be found in Penchev (2021b).

Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora has been transposed in the Republic of Bulgaria's legislation with paragraph 68 of the final provisions to the Act amending and supplementing Biological Diversity Act (2002). Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds replaced Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds, that has been transposed in the Republic of Bulgaria's legislation with paragraph 68 of the final provisions to the Act amending and supplementing Biological Diversity Act (2002).

The main aim of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna is to contribute towards ensuring biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora in the European territory of the Member States to which the threats applies. Measures taken pursuant to this Directive shall be designed to maintain or restore, at favorable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest.

Member States are required to comply with the following measures for the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora under Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora:

1. A coherent European ecological network of special areas of conservation shall be set up under the title "Natura 2000". This network, composed of sites hosting the natural habitat types listed in Annex I of this directive and habitats of the species listed in Annex II of this Directive, shall enable the natural habitat types and the species' habitats concerned to be maintained or, where appropriate, restored at a favorable conservation status in their natural range.

2. Member States shall establish a system of strict conservation for the animal species listed in Annex IV of this Directive in their natural range, prohibiting:

2.1. Deliberate destruction or taking of eggs from the wild;

2.2. Deterioration or destruction of breeding sites or resting places;

2.3. All forms of deliberate capture or killing of specimens of these species in the wild;

2.4. Deliberate disturbance of these species, particularly during the period of breeding, rearing, hibernation and migration.

3. For species listed in Annex IV of this Directive, Member States shall prohibit the keeping, transport and sale or exchange, and offering for sale or exchange, of specimens taken from the wild, except for those taken legally before this Directive is implemented.

4. Member States shall establish a system to monitor the incidental capture and killing of the animal species listed in Annex IV of this Directive.

5. Member States shall to establish a system of strict conservation for the plant species listed in Annex IV of this Directive, prohibiting:

5.1. The keeping, transport and sale or exchange and offering for sale or exchange of specimens of such species taken in the wild, except for those taken legally before this Directive is implemented.

5.2. The deliberate picking, collecting, cutting, uprooting or destruction of such plants in their natural range in the wild;

6. Every six years from the date of expiry of the period laid down in Article 23 of this Directive, Member States shall draw up a report on the implementation of the measures taken under this Directive.

The main aim of Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds is to provide long-term conservation of the species of wild birds naturally occurring in the European territory of the Member States to which the Treaty applies. That is necessary in order to attain the Community's objectives regarding the improvement of living conditions and sustainable development. Measures taken pursuant to this Directive shall be designed to the preservation, maintenance or restoration of a sufficient diversity and area of habitats, which are essential to the conservation of all species of birds.

Member States are required to comply with the following measures for the conservation of wild birds under Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds:

1. The preservation, maintenance and re-establishment of biotopes and habitats shall include primarily the following measures:

- 1.1. Creation of biotopes;
- 1.2. Creation of protected areas;
- 1.3. Re-establishment of destroyed biotopes;
- 1.4. Upkeep and management in accordance

with the ecological needs of habitats inside and outside the protected zones.

2. Member States shall establish a general system of conservation for all species of birds referred to in Article 1 of this Directive, prohibiting in particular:

2.1. Deliberate destruction of, or damage to, their nests and eggs or removal of their nests;

2.2. Deliberate killing or capture by any method;

2.3. Deliberate disturbance of these birds particularly during the period of breeding and rearing, in so far as disturbance would be significant having regard to the objectives of this Directive;

2.4. Taking their eggs in the wild and keeping these eggs even if empty.

3. Member States shall prohibit, for all the bird species referred to in Article 1 of this Directive, the sale, transport for sale, keeping for sale and the offering for sale of live or dead birds and of any readily recognizable parts or derivatives of such birds.

4. Member States shall forward to the Commission every three years, starting from 7 April 1981, a report on the implementation of national provisions taken under this Directive.

Conclusions

Based on analysis made in this article, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. It is necessary to consider the need to develop an entirely new one „Protected Natural Areas Act” with the participation of practicing specialists – ecologists and scientists with a view to rethinking the categories and ownership of the natural areas.

2. There is no provision in the Protected Areas Act to list the principles that must be followed to guide the competent authorities in the Republic of Bulgaria in their activities for conservation of the natural areas. This fact creates the impression that the importance of legal prin-

ciples is underestimated. This is main reason for amending Protected Areas Act in this direction.

3. Currently, there is still no international multilateral universal or regional contract with the participation of the Republic of Bulgaria to dedicated or regulate only legal regime of the natural areas.

4. There are no provision in the examined international agreements to list the principles that must be followed to guide the participating countries in their activities to implement the relevant international agreement.

5. The commented international agreements lack a provision regarding the manner of resolving disputes regarding their interpretation and application.

Acknowledgments

This article is realized under the national program “Young scientists and postdocs - 2” by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria. I would like to thank to Professor DSc. Georgi Penchev, Professor PhD Liuba Panaiotova-Chalakovska, Associate Professor DSc. Dilian Georgiev, Associate Professor PhD Ivelin Mollov, Chief Assistant Professor PhD Antonia Ilieva and Chief Assistant Professor PhD Vesela Yancheva for a pre-peer review of the manuscript.

References

- Biological Diversity Act. (2002). *State Gazette*, 77, 09.08.2002. Retrieved from: <https://lex.bg>. (In Bulgarian).
- Council of Europe (2000). *The European Landscape Convention*. Retrieved from: <https://www.coe.int/>.
- Council of the European Union (1992). *Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora*. Retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu>.
- Cremer, L. (2008). *European environmental law*. Ciela Publ., Sofia, 694.
- Cultural Heritage Act. (2009). *State Gazette*, 19, 13.03.2009. Retrieved from: <https://lex.bg>. (In Bulgarian).
- Environmental Protection Act. (2002). *State Gazette*, 91, 25.09.2002. Retrieved from: <https://lex.bg>. (In Bulgarian).

- European Parliament and Council of the European Union (2010). Directive 2009/147/EC of 30 November 2009 of the conservation of wild birds. Retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu>.
- Forestry Act. (2011). State Gazette, 19, 08.03.2011. Retrieved from: <https://lex.bg>. (In Bulgarian).
- Gillespie, A. (2007). Natural Areas and International Environmental Law. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Leiden, Netherlands, 183–228.
- Hadzhiev, D. (2022). Acquisition of property rights through constitutive judgements. Ciela Publ., Sofia, Bulgaria, 38-60.
- Hristova, N. (2022). Legal Essence of the Natural Areas Under the Protected Areas Act. *Biznes i pravo*, 1, 81. Retrieved from: <https://business-law.unwe.bg/>.
- Hristova, N. (2021). Preservation and Use of the natural areas, and Adoption of Plans for their Management (Administrative Law Aspects). *Biznes i pravo*, 1, 82. Retrieved from: <https://business-law.unwe.bg/>.
- Hristova, N. (2018). Administrative legal regime of national parks. Damyan Yakov Publ., Sofia, Bulgaria, 102-103.
- Ilieva, A. (2020). The Current Environmental Law and Medical Waste and its Impact as Hazardous Pollutant – A Short Review. *Ecologia Balkanica*, 12(2), 219-233, Retrieved from: <https://ecologia-balkanica.com/>.
- Owen, O. (1989). Conservation of natural resources, First part. Zemizdat publ., Sofia, Bulgaria, 296-303.
- Penchev, G. (2023). Environmental Law, Special part, Study guide, Third revised and enlarged edition. Ciela publ., Sofia, Bulgaria, 198-199.
- Penchev, G. (2022). International legal regime of the protected natural territories under international multilateral treaties with participation of the Republic of Bulgaria, *Studia Iuris*, 1, 8. Retrieved from: <https://studiaiuris.com/>.
- Penchev, G. (2021a). Environmental Law Aspects of the Introduction of Species of Wild Flora and Fauna under the Law of the European Union in the Light of the Protection of the Protected Natural Territories. *Biznes i pravo*, 1, 49-76. Retrieved from: <https://business-law.unwe.bg/>.
- Penchev, G. (2021b). Environmental Law regime of the protected natural territories in the Republic of Bulgaria. *Studia Iuris*, 2, 8. Retrieved from: <https://studiaiuris.com/>.
- Penchev, G. (2013). Social Function of Bulgarian Environmental Law, *Revista Crítica de Historia de las Relaciones Laborales y de la Política Social*, 4-5, 29-30.
- Protected Areas Act. (1998). State Gazette, 133, 11.11.1998. Retrieved from: <https://lex.bg>. (In Bulgarian).
- Shelton, D., Kiss, A. (2005). Judicial Handbook on Environmental Law. UNEP, Nairobi, 91–92.
- Spatial Development Act. (2001). State Gazette, 1, 02.01.2001. Retrieved from: <https://lex.bg>. (In Bulgarian).
- The Council of the European Communities (1979). Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds. Retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu>.
- The European Landscape Convention ratification Act. (2004). State Gazette, 94, 22.10.2004. Retrieved from: <https://dv.parliament.bg>. (In Bulgarian).
- UNESCO (1972). Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Retrieved from: <https://whc.unesco.org/>
- UNESCO (1971). Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat. Retrieved from: <https://en.unesco.org/>
- Yancheva, V., Velcheva, I., Georgieva, E., Stoyanova, S., Todorova, B., Antal, L., Nyeste, K. (2023). Are *Mytilus* species suitable bioindicators for assessing aquatic pollution along the Black Sea Coast? A review, *Ecologia Balkanica*, Vol. 15, Issue 1, 49-76, Retrieved from: <https://ecologia-balkanica.com/>.

Received: 01.03.2023
Accepted: 31.03.2023