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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**  
23<sup>rd</sup> meeting

Strasbourg, 1-5 December 2003

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**Specific File**

**Construction of a Motorway in the Gorge of Kresna  
- Corridor No. 4 of transport: EU PHARE Project –  
Connection Bulgaria - Greece**  
(Motorway E79 : Sofia-Kulata)

**Report by the Government**

*Secretariat Memorandum*  
*Prepared by*  
*The Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage*

## **PROJECT TO BUILD A MOTORWAY IN THE KRESNA GORGE (BULGARIA)**

### **1. Looking for alternative variants out of gorge**

The Bern Convention Secretariat has been informed so far about all proposals concerning alternatives of trace of the highway out of Kresna gorge. All actual information has been provided also to the Standing Committee during its 22-nd annual meeting in December 2002. No other proposals for alternative traces have been done since that time.

As we have already declared, the position of Ministry of Environment and Water concerning alternative traces out of the gorge is that they have to be included and adequate evaluated in the EIA report in all ecological, economical and social aspects.

With regard to this in May, 2002 MOEW has sent a preliminary project handling the highway section Dolna Dikanja – Kulata prepared by “Krassy – Bo” Ltd to the attention of Executive Road Agency with insistence the project to be taken into consideration and detailed evaluation in the supplement to the EIA report to be prepared.

In December, 2002 an idea project as a task of BSPB/BirdLife Bulgaria - Alternative trace of Struma highway in the section Simitly – Dolna Gradeshnitsa, prepared by “Wotan Consult – Petar Tzolov” Ltd. has been provided to MOEW for information. The project has been deposited within their competence to Ministry of development and regional planning and Executive Road Agency. In this connection MOEW insists that the proposed alternative highway trace out of gorge be examined and evaluated in EIA report together with all other alternatives and proposals for displacement of the trace which have been done during the public discussions.

### **2. Advance in the procedure for evaluation of EIA report**

During present year Executive Road Agency has assigned a task for elaboration of new EIA report for the Struma highway. All existing variants have to be considered (incl. variants from Preliminary EIA report as well as those proposed by “Krasi –Bo and Wotan” Ltd., entrusted by BSPB/BirdLife Bulgaria).

### **3. Partnership dialogue**

The partnership dialogue usually is provoked in case of some changes in the situation which have not been registered during last months. In November, 2002 a meeting has been organized by BSPB/BirdLife Bulgaria for presentation of new alternative for highway trace out of Kresna gorge (see above), for which the Bern Convention Standing Committee has been informed in December 2002. The meeting attended by all interested sides was constructive.

The talks and information exchange on the present topic have been either informal or in form of bilateral correspondence.

### **4. Legal status of contiguous territories**

Kresna gorge with large contiguous areas around are included in Bulgarian-Danish project for establishment of protected zones, which will appear the Bulgarian part of ecological network “Nature 2000”. The project is in working state and no administrative procedures have been carried out for declaration of territories as a part of the Ecological network. The procedure for declaration of new protected area also has not been terminated, thus there is no change in the legal status of the gorge contiguous territories.

### **5. Project finance**

We do not dispose of official information concerning changes occurred in the finance status of the project through PHARE program.