



**BGNATURAGENEFUND -  
Conservation of the Genetic Fund  
and Restoration of Priority Forest  
Habitats in Natura 2000 Sites**

**LIFE10 NAT/BG/000146**



[Project description](#) [Environmental issues](#) [Beneficiaries](#) [Administrative data](#)  
[Read more](#)

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**Project description:**

**Background**

Two types of natural forest habitats found in western Bulgaria, identified as a priority for conservation in the EU Habitats Directive, face similar threats and conservation problems. They are: Pannonian woods with *Quercus pubescens* and Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior*. In recent decades, vast tracts of these natural forests, rich in biodiversity, have been cut down and replaced with more productive, commercial monocultures of non-native species such as *Pinus nigra*, *Pinus Sylvestris*, *Gleditschia triacanthos*, *Robinia pseudoacacia* and others. Biodiversity aspects were neglected or underestimated. Two designated Natura 2000 network sites – Plana and Dragoman – situated in low mountainous areas of western Bulgaria, have been selected as target sites for conservation and restoration actions.

## Objectives

The project aims to improve the conservation status of the two priority forest habitats of the Natura 2000 sites of Dragoman and Plana in western Bulgaria: Pannonian woods with *Quercus pubescens*; and Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior*. This will also indirectly benefit the following priority forest habitats: Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines; Pannonic woods with *Quercus petraea* and *Carpinus betulus*; Euro-Siberian steppic woods with *Quercus spp*; (Sub-)Mediterranean pine forests with endemic black pines; and Endemic forests with *Juniperus spp*.

Another objective is to create the right conditions for the ex-situ conservation and restoration of other deteriorated forest habitats of European importance in Bulgaria, by establishing a gene bank for reproductive material and provision of plants for restoration.

The project will carry out awareness-raising activities among the local and wider general public on the Natura 2000 network and on the need to adapt forest management to factors such as climate change. It will also provide and exchange information on sustainable restoration methods and conservation management issues for the ecosystems concerned.

These goals will be achieved through various actions including: analysis of threats and risk assessment for the targeted priority forest habitats; establishment of a gene bank; collection of reproductive plant material; and pilot restoration of priority forest habitats.

Expected results:

- A genetic seed bank for tree species represented in seven priority habitats;
- Collection of genetic material and production of seedlings;
- Restored forest habitats – 40 ha of Pannonian woods with *Quercus pubescens* and Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior*;
- Raised awareness of different target groups; and
- Expert analysis / risk assessment and proposed measures / management activities for the adaption of priority forest habitats to climate change and the prevention of natural disasters.

## Results

[Top](#)

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Environmental issues addressed:

Keywords

restoration measure, conservation of genetic resources, forest ecosystem,

Target Habitat types

- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)
- Pannonian woods with *Quercus pubescens*

Natura 2000 sites

Dragoman  
Plana

[Top](#)

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	Forest Seed Control Station - Sofia
Type of organisation	National authority
Description	The Forest Seed Control Station – Sofia - is a division of the state-owned Executive Forestry Agency (EFA). It is responsible for the establishment and management of the forest seed bank – covering basic and forestry reproductive material (maintenance of quality and identification).

Partners

Vitosha Initiative Group Association, Bulgaria

[Top](#)

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE10 NAT/BG/000146
Duration	01-SEP-2011 to 30-JUN -2015
Total budget	589,602.00 €
EU contribution	439,602.00 €
Project location	Associated Bulgaria (BG)

[Top](#)

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Read more:

[Top](#)

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[Project description](#) [Environmental issues](#) [Beneficiaries](#) [Administrative data](#)  
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