

Sustainability in Action:

NGO Initiatives for Sustainable Development in the Western Balkans



European Commission
EuropeAid



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

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JANUARY 2006

Authors

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REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

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The REC was established in 1990 by the United States, the European Commission and Hungary. Today, the REC is legally based on a charter signed by the governments of 28 countries and the European Commission, and on an international agreement with the government of Hungary. The REC has its head office in Szentendre, Hungary, and country offices and field offices in 16 beneficiary countries which are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey.

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BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CARDS	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CP	Concept paper
CO	Country Office
EU	European Union
FP	Full proposal
GMO	Genetically modified organisms
HO	Head office (of the Regional Environmental Center)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
REC	Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe
SCG	State Union of Serbia and Montenegro
SEE	South Eastern Europe
UN	United Nations
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo

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Richard Filcak

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Foreword

Once one has overcome the difficulty of understanding — or explaining — the concept of sustainable development, one is faced with the even thornier problem of actually trying to put sustainable development into practice. Ever since the 1992 Earth Summit the difficulty of bringing about sustainable development has become more and more evident. Numerous programmes, initiatives, strategies and plans have attempted to make some meaningful progress towards sustainability, with varying levels of success.

One facet that has been recognised is that for sustainability to occur broad society involvement has to be a part of the agenda. The role of civil society — and its institutions (such as NGOs) — is therefore crucial to the engagement and involvement of wider society and the actual attainment of sustainability. Without them any initiative is liable to be one-sided or top-down, with a subsequently lower chance of success.

This has become apparent in the countries of the Western Balkans, where society has had to rebuild itself after a period of conflict and political upheaval. Strengthened civil society in this region is seen as a prerequisite for the transition to democratically based societies. However, much of the transition has been based on promoting the growth of market economies, with all of their well-established environmental problems as well as social inequality. It is only natural therefore that the debate about the future development of this sensitive region should lean towards the introduction of sustainability as a principle of transition and development.

This publication highlights a two-and-a-half year granting programme, funded by the European Commission's Community Assistance for Reconstruction and Stabilisation (CARDS) programme, designed to support the development of NGO initiatives for sustainable development in the Western Balkans. The report describes the reasons for targeting this sector and the role of NGOs in promoting sustainability. It describes the process and outcomes of the programme (including an extensive annex of fact sheets from many of the successful projects) and then focuses on the future, by reflecting on lessons learned and proposing practical steps forwards for civil society organisations in the region.

It is hoped that the publication and the results herein will serve as an inspiration and a resource for others, whether they are developing new programmes to promote sustainability or are civil society activists looking to learn from the lessons of others. Whatever the means, let us hope that sustainability in action is the final outcome.

Robert Atkinson
Director for Civil Initiatives
REC, Szentendre, Hungary



A Sustainable Balkans: Why Support NGOs?

A Sustainable Balkans: Why Support NGOs?

From Transition to Sustainability

The Western Balkan region¹ has experienced significant and dramatic changes over the last two decades. The disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the collapse of the communist regime in Albania and the scarring by war and inter-ethnic conflict, have been followed by a period of international support and assistance for political and economic transition. The recent (2004) accession of neighbouring countries into the European Union marks a further round of changes, as does the acceptance of Croatia for candidate status in late 2005 and the participation of other Western Balkan nations in the Stabilisation and Association Process.

Some of the countries are now on a relatively fast development track, some (due to historical and societal reasons) face serious difficulties in their economic transformation. However, what they all have in common is the changes taking place in the relationship between human beings and the environment caused by economic and political transition. The environment is under various types of pressure. Some of these are global while others are clearly local, such as the impact of tourism on the coastal environment or traffic pressure in urban centres. As the market economy has become the driver of development, policy, legal and administrative frameworks for the protection of nature, the environment have been struggling to keep pace. The implementation and enforcement of legislation is a particular challenge. In addition, the social standards and quality of life have fallen for the vast majority of people in these countries, with programmes that assist the disadvantaged often reduced or curtailed.

The Western Balkans are now exposed to wider threats and challenges, such as the impact of globalisation on traditional lifestyles, growing consumerism, dependence on external markets, migration and social instability. These trends indicate a general threat to the environment and social well-being in the region. They also indicate growing problems with the “quality” of development and its sustainability (For background information on the sustainable development concept see **Figure 1**).

Despite this, the countries of the Western Balkans have many opportunities to achieve a more sustainable development. The transition process allows them possibilities to establish institutions and develop legislation that is environmentally sound, promotes good governance, and uses the emerging civil society as a factor in delivering sustainability. Furthermore, the economic restructuring they undergo could be aimed at creating healthy economies through the reduction of unsustainable subsidies and decreasing the level of raw material consumption and waste production.

FIGURE 1

Background to sustainable development

The concept of sustainable development emerged in the early 1970s as a response to the challenges posed by economic development without consideration for the protection of natural resources or the environment. The Brundtland Report, the pioneering work in the field of sustainable development, defines sustainable development as: “fostering development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The sustainability concept recognises the interdependence of environmental, social and economic systems and promotes equality, justice and social improvement through public empowerment and a sense of global citizenship. In order to foster sustainable development, international processes have been initiated to bring about synergy in the efforts of the international community and the countries themselves. The Rio Earth Summit in 1992 resulted in a global plan for action for sustainable development: Agenda 21. Ten years later the Johannesburg Summit 2002 provided an opportunity to adopt concrete steps and identify means and targets for better implementing Agenda 21.

The European Union declares in its sustainable development strategy that the concept of sustainability is one of the guiding

principles in the development of its policies, programmes and projects. Sustainable development is seen as a positive long-term vision for a society that is more prosperous and more just, and which promises a cleaner, safer, healthier environment — a society which delivers a better quality of life. Achieving this in practice requires that economic growth supports social progress and respects the environment; that social policy underpins economic performance; and that environmental policy is cost-effective.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have played a major role in promoting the sustainable development agenda at the international and national levels. Campaigning groups have been the key drivers of inter-governmental negotiations. Also, local and national groups have been directly implementing pilot projects to demonstrate sustainable development in practice. The results of such pilot projects have often been considered when defining a country’s national sustainable development strategy. NGOs have also been instrumental in enabling cooperation with other stakeholders, such as businesses, media and academics.

European Policy Framework for Sustainable Development and Balkan Civil Society

The European Union acknowledges its global responsibility for bringing about sustainable development. The EU, through enlargement and support for other countries, targets sustainability as one of the key principles underpinning its assistance programmes and projects.

The EU Sustainable Development Strategy² states that: “The EU [sustainable development] strategy should look beyond the Union’s present borders to be relevant for the countries which will join the Union during the coming years.” These future member states face many of the same problems as the present EU members, but also have a number of distinctive features. For example, they have well preserved countryside and rich biodiversity.

The sustainable development strategy provides a broader framework, while the EU’s Lisbon Strategy³ provides an encompassing vision, namely “the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress and a high level of protection and improvement in the quality of the environment.”

The Sixth Environment Action Programme⁴ takes a wide-ranging approach to the practical challenges of environmental improvement and gives a strategic direction to the European Commission’s environmental policy. It sees the participation of all actors — including businesses, citizens, NGOs, and social partners — as a key element for imple-

mentation, and promotes this through better and more accessible information on the environment and joint work on solutions. The Sixth EAP gives recognition to the importance of the development of institutional and legal systems, but to truly boost sustainable growth at the regional, state or local levels, countries require the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

It has become evident that grassroots work with municipalities, local organisations and people may bring about the best results for the implementation of sustainability principles in practice. As such, citizen-based, small-scale demonstration projects, the changing of production and consumption patterns, alternative plans for waste management, and the protection of cultural values through enhancing nature conservation may show the way forward. Civil society and its representatives (i.e. NGOs) are therefore key stakeholders in meeting the goals of sustainable development and driving such development in practical terms. This is the most significant message gleaned from the various EU strategies and programmes outlined above.

Western Balkan countries have participated in the global and European processes for sustainability, and some of them actively address the issue. The need for the elaboration of a national sustainable development strategy is acknowledged as one of the priorities of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, while Croatia has been implementing sustainability principles across sectoral policies. Both the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Montenegro are formulating and implementing their own sustainable development strategies.

Over a number of years the European Union has supported the development of civil society in the Western Balkans through targeted assistance to relevant stakeholders. One key instrument is the **Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS)** programme. This programme helps the countries of the Western Balkans with their EU accession aspirations and underpins the objectives and mechanisms of the Stabilisation and Association Process, which is the EU policy framework for the region.

CARDS has directed financial support to the region to reinforce: democracy and the rule of law; human rights; civil society and the media; and the operation of a free-market economy. In addition, assistance is offered to help generate sustainable economic recovery, and promote social development and structural reform. Another aspect of the programme is the promotion of regional cooperation between the Western Balkan countries, as well as between the region and EU member states and candidate countries. All these aims are vitally important to the promotion of sustainable development.

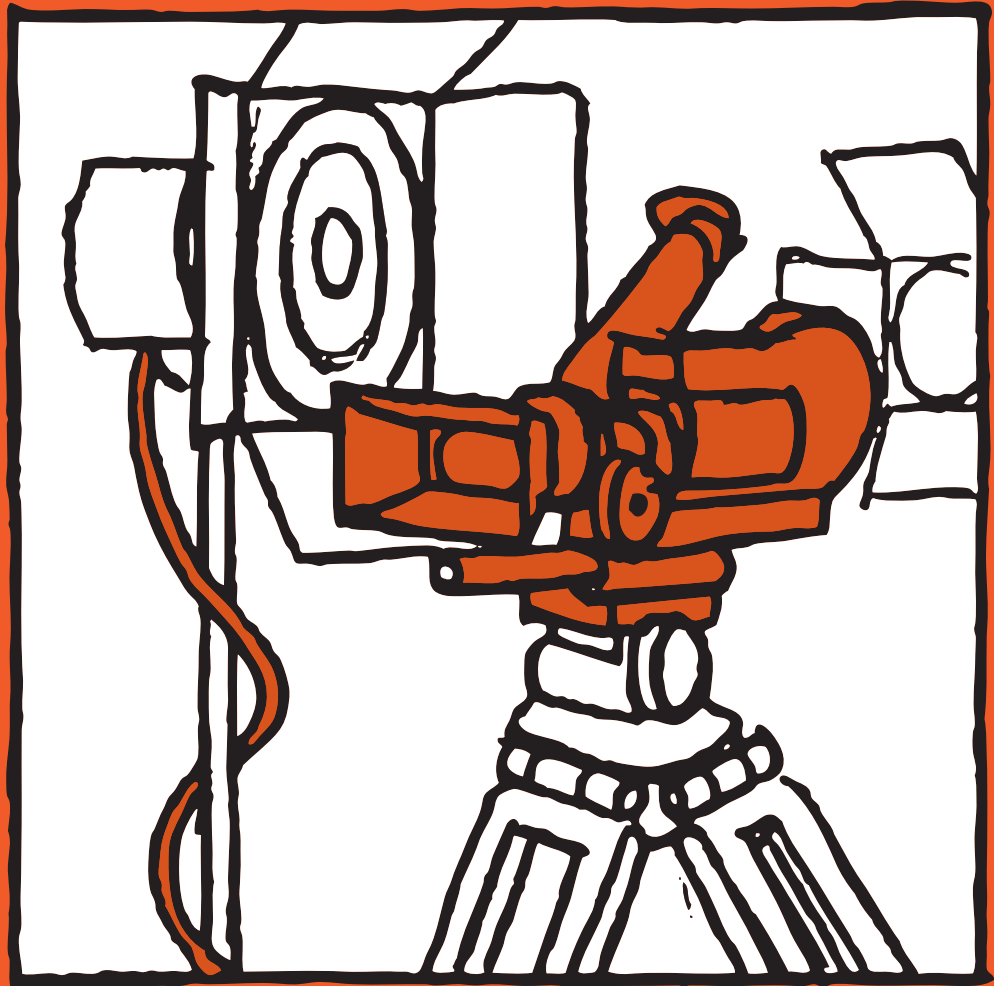
In view of the need to support citizens' initiatives on sustainable development, the REC, with the support of the European Commission (EuropeAid), designed and launched an NGO granting programme in October 2003 for the Western Balkans. This programme, Develop Regional NGO Activities for Sustainable Development, ran until January 2006. The programme sought to support the role of NGOs in fostering sustainable development in the region, both at the national and regional levels. This publication represents a description of how the programme functioned, its outcomes and results, and the lessons learned in terms of improving the role of civil society organisations in promoting sustainable development.

References

- 1 The Western Balkans is taken to comprise the following states: Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration).

It has become evident that grassroots work with municipalities, local organisations and people may bring about the best results for the implementation of sustainability principles in practice.

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- 3 Communication to the Spring European Council. "Working together for Growth and Jobs: A New Start for the Lisbon Strategy." Communication from President Barroso in agreement with Vice-President Verheugen (2005).
- 4 Environment 2010. Our Future, Our Choice. The Sixth Environment Action Programme of the European Community (2002).



The Grant Programme: What Was Undertaken



The Grant Programme: What Was Undertaken

Grant Programme Overview

The EC-funded project Develop Regional NGO Activities for Sustainable Development was for all intents and purposes a granting programme. Lasting from October 2003 until January 2006, the main goal was to encourage and support national and regional NGO activities for sustainable development. In total, EUR 715,071 was distributed through regional and national grants.

The programme assisted civil society organisations in the Western Balkans in preparing and implementing sustainable development practices through projects, and helped these organisations to share the skills and knowledge through regional NGO cooperation. While NGOs were at the centre of the programme, projects usually involved other stakeholders, and acted as catalysts in promoting activities among them.

The programme built on the existing regional and local initiatives of NGOs, governments, municipalities and other stakeholders and supported the promotion of new sustainable development initiatives where they did not already exist. In summary, the programme enabled NGOs to:

- strengthen their positions and define their roles in effectively improving environmental quality at the local and regional levels by promoting sustainable development issues, such as: sustainable lifestyles, GMO-free environments, renewable energy, the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources, organic agriculture, good governance, and social equality;
- raise the population's awareness of sustainable development in order to alter their behaviour towards more environmentally friendly approaches;
- collaborate with their respective governments in developing sustainable development priorities for their countries and address them through a cooperative approach; and
- cooperate with other NGOs to address the cross-border, regional environmental issues, in particular those related to regional development.

Open and competitive granting programmes were launched at the national and regional levels across the Western Balkan region, by both the REC head office and country offices. These calls for project proposals were designed to identify promising and innovative NGO projects, enabling the target groups to contribute to the sustainable development of the region in line with the programme's aims. The scope and results of the two components (national and regional) are described below in more detail.

National Grants

There are many ways in which small demonstration projects can contribute to practical sustainable development, such as helping to change consumption and production patterns. Small and dedicated groups of citizens can also influence decision-making processes at the local or even state levels and promote environmentally and socially responsible decisions. Supporting these types of activities and initiatives was the scope of the national grants component. NGOs active at the national or local levels in the six targeted territories were the main focus of the programme, particularly those groups offering innovative solutions or demonstration projects.

Both competitive and open granting processes, with independent decision makers, were established by the REC in order to select the best projects for support. The process was “two-stage,” meaning that the REC first solicited concept papers (CP) and then, after a selection process reduced the number of projects and solicited full proposals (FP). The final list of granted projects was selected from this core group of developed proposals. As part of the capacity development for NGOs, the REC and its independent experts supported the development of FPs with comments and advice.

As sustainability requires an integrated view of different sectors of society, grants were distributed to projects that applied an integrated and holistic approach by involving different groups of society (e.g. local/central authorities, the business sector, academic institutions and community leaders) and by addressing the underlying causes of unsustainable development. National grants were awarded to projects which addressed one of three themes:

- Developing from Traditions;
- Developing Institutional Tools for Sustainable Communities; and
- Alternative Ways of Sustainable Living.

These projects had EUR 556,000 available for support, distributed through two rounds of calls during the programme period. The wide interest in the calls from the NGO sector is illustrated by the high number of proposals submitted. Overall, COs received some 624 project concepts; of these 71 were chosen for funding, with a total of EUR 552,329 awarded for national grants. **Figure 2** illustrates the number of projects awarded and the amount distributed per country.

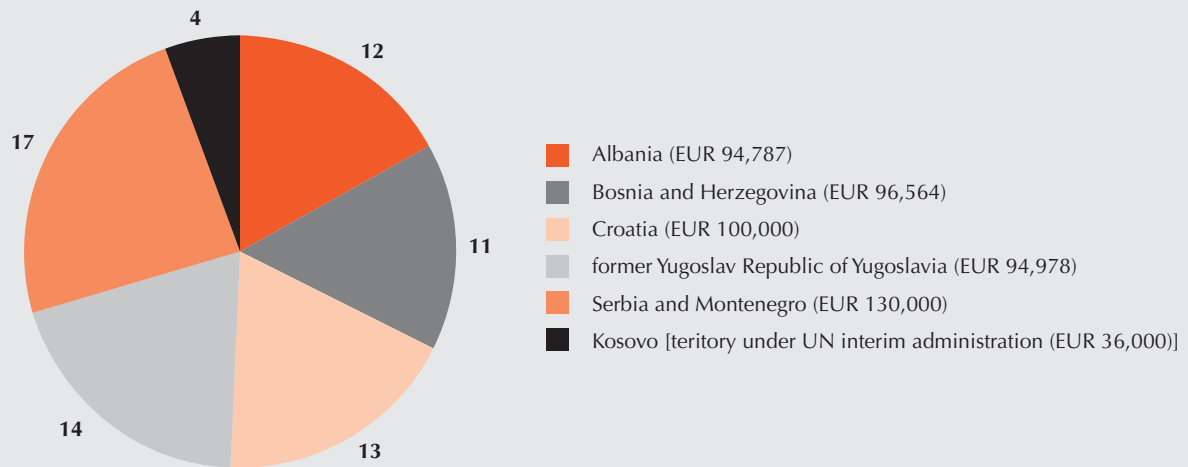
The projects selected covered a broad spectrum of activities, from the promotion of eco-farming, sustainable human settlements, waste reduction and traditional ways of living, to local level organising and planning through Agenda 21 processes. The activities supported at the national level helped to:

- financially assist the Western Balkan NGOs to develop their projects in support of sustainable development in the SEE region; and
- promote cooperation between NGOs and local and regional authorities in addressing sustainable development issues.

Some examples of the supported national projects are given in the fact sheets section (see the annex).

FIGURE 2

Distribution of National Grants



Regional Grants

The regional grants portion of the programme was developed to promote regional cooperation between the Western Balkan countries. The building of regional networks and the sharing of know-how and skills through the joint implementation of projects is an important mechanism to build regional sustainability on common issues. The capacity development of less experienced partners working side-by-side with those more advanced and the promotion of trans-boundary approaches in addressing development challenges were important aims of the programme.

The programme objectives encouraged and supported regional NGO activities for sustainable development by:

- lending financial and technical help to the Western Balkan NGOs to develop their projects supporting the sustainable development of the SEE region;
- identification and support of NGO projects which positively impact trans-boundary or regional welfare in the Western Balkans; and
- promotion of cross-border and inter-sectoral cooperation between NGOs and local municipalities in addressing sustainable development issues.

Grants were awarded to projects addressing one of two main themes:

- the sustainable development of trans-boundary areas; and
- networking for sustainable development.

FIGURE 3

Regional Grants Projects

COUNTRIES INVOLVED	PROJECT TITLE	SHORT DESCRIPTION	MAIN THEME
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Serbia and Montenegro	Integrated Approach to Solving Traffic Related Problems from a Sustainable Aspect	This project aimed to promote sustainable communities, with particular regard to transport issues. It included the promotion of public transport; raising awareness of the consequences of uncontrolled traffic emissions; and examined the conditions — particularly in urban planning — that lead to unsustainable transportation patterns.	Networking for sustainable development
Croatia Bosnia and Herzegovina	Balkan Ecovillage Network	The overall goal of the project was to increase the capacities and level of cooperation across the target region between organisations and institutions active in the field of sustainable rural development, by setting up a new network.	Networking for sustainable development
Croatia Bosnia and Herzegovina Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	SuDNet (Sustainable Development Network)	The overall goal of this project was to promote the concept of sustainable development and raise awareness among the general public in the target regions. The project initiated a networking process and formed partnerships between the NGOs from the three countries involved.	Networking for sustainable development
Serbia and Montenegro Albania	Sustainable Development of the River Cijevna/Cemni Area	This project contributed to efforts to promote and put into practice public participation in decision making on sustainable development issues in cross-border areas of Montenegro and Albania. It supported multi-ethnic dialogue, capacity building and cooperation between stakeholders.	Sustainable development of trans-boundary areas
Serbia and Montenegro Bosnia and Herzegovina	Local Agenda for the Sustainable Development of Serbia and Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina	This project aimed to raise awareness of the sustainability of organic agriculture, and strengthen the organic agriculture movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia and Montenegro.	Networking for sustainable development
Albania Croatia	Paving the Way to Making South East Europe a GM-free Zone.	The aim of this project was to demonstrate that biotechnology represents an extension and entrenchment of unsustainable agricultural practices, and that GMOs can undermine national food sovereignty and food security in the region if introduced — deliberately or accidentally — into agricultural systems.	Networking for sustainable development

The grants awarded supported projects linking NGOs and stakeholders from the six targeted territories (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration)). In the regional call for projects, the REC received 26 concept papers. Of these, six projects were selected for funding, which amounted to EUR 162,742 for region-wide activities. See **Figure 3** for titles and short descriptions of the projects, and Annex 1 for more detailed descriptions.

The projects selected brought together 15 NGOs to participate directly in the awarded activities either as leaders or partner organisations. Many others were involved in the practical activities. The projects covered a variety of issues, including: the promotion of regional networking for sustainability; the West Balkans as a GMO-free zone; the trans-boundary protection of an international river River Cijevna/Cemni (Cijevna River is name used in Serbia and Montenegro, while it is known as Cemni River in Albania); joint projects for Agenda 21 implementation (Tuzla and Subotica); and practical steps to improve traffic-related problems in two capital cities (Skopje and Belgrade). Such diversity demonstrates the wide variety of regional sustainability problems and the methods that can be utilised by civil society groups to resolve them.



The Grant Programme: Lessons and Outcomes

The Grant Programme: Lessons and Outcomes

This programme helped to activate local civil groups, supported ideas promoting sustainability, brought about real activities addressing environmental and social threats in the region and assisted in the development of NGOs by promoting networking and capacity development. There are lessons to be learned from project implementation, and the outcomes of the projects themselves.

The first section of this chapter focuses on the lessons learned, summarising the challenges and opportunities NGOs faced during implementation, as stated by the NGOs and their partners during the REC's monitoring process. The second section focuses on the programme's general outcomes, summarising the main ways in which the programme contributed to furthering sustainable development and the development of civil society in the region.

Lessons Learned through Project Implementation

There were many elements NGOs considered relevant to the success or failure of their projects. One factor that emerged was that true sustainable development must entail a holistic approach to development plans and their implementation. Project planning must also take longer-term perspectives and involve greater participation from all stakeholders. Effective participation from stakeholders requires a willingness to collaborate and mutual respect from all parties. It also requires open access to relevant information and know-how. NGOs can only play an effective role in these processes — particularly driving roles — when they have motivated and well-trained staff, sufficient funds, and a good plan for the implementation of activities.

NGOs faced a variety of challenges during project implementation. These included:

- The concept of sustainable development is prone to different interpretations and there is still not enough information and know-how.
- Difficulties arise because of different languages in cross-border projects.
- Decision makers, including state and municipal administrations, are often hesitant to cooperate or create opportunities for participation in decision making.
- It is difficult to turn stakeholder involvement from declarative support into real support.

The project outcomes support the claim that most of the NGOs succeeded in addressing the challenges, and were effective in building good project teams, involving relevant stakeholders and making the projects successful at the local and regional levels. The outcomes of the projects are summarised in the following section.

Seventy-one projects were selected (out of 624 proposals received) and implemented within the six countries

Programme Outcomes

This granting programme, and the individual projects it supported, produced numerous measurable as well as tangible results. In total, 71 projects were selected (out of the 624 proposals received) and implemented within the six countries of the West Balkan region. These projects were selected by local experts in collaboration with REC country and field offices in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro (SCG) and Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration). The projects were selected based on transparent criteria and procedures, and implemented with assistance and guidance from the REC offices.

Regionally, the REC head office — in collaboration with independent, experienced and recognised experts — selected six regional initiatives for implementation (out of 26 project ideas received). The projects awarded involved NGOs from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro. These figures represent a substantial amount of NGO activity over the two years in which the programme was implemented, often with high visibility for professionals and the general public.

Financially, this European Commission-supported programme awarded and distributed (through the REC) EUR 552,329 in national grants and EUR 162,742 for regional activities. In addition to the direct support this provided for activities, the financial support assisted NGOs in their organisational development, particularly with their skills in proper financial management and reporting procedures, which are important for professional operations.

The amount of financial support distributed may be considered as significant, but in reality — as is evident from the experience of EU candidate countries — the amount of investment that will be needed to improve environmental protection and social cohesion is enormous. However, small but important demonstration and replicable pilot projects may serve as good examples, as they illustrate approaches to sustainable development that focus on fostering changes in decision making and behaviour, and ultimately have more impact than might be expected simply in investment terms.

Tangible project results

Many projects focused on activities directly contributing to environmental improvements and the promotion of sustainable modes of living. The remediation of a contaminated industrial site in Belgrade and the promotion of traditional and environmentally-friendly cheese-making are among the examples (see the fact sheets in Annex 1). The aim of the practical examples was to demonstrate ways in which to affect change. The tangible results of the projects in the areas of nature conservation, agricultural production, species protection, production and consumption patterns, countryside preservation, and organic farming will now serve as good practices and examples for local and regional decision makers, other NGOs, and the wider public. The wealth of booklets, guidelines, websites and other printed materials will support the dissemination and multiplication of the results and the promotion of the good ideas contained therein. They also demonstrate to countries beyond the region's borders that, by supporting NGO activities, progress can be made towards sustainable development.

Sustainability on the agenda

One of the programme's aims was to stimulate public discussion and put the challenge of sustainable development on the agenda at the local and regional levels. Regional cooperation between two NGOs in Skopje and Belgrade contributed to efficient public campaigns for sustainable transport policies in both cities, building on the transfer of know-how and skills between them. The projects supported have clearly contributed to an improved consciousness among Western Balkan NGOs and public awareness of their role in sustainable development. Media campaigns, lobbying and promotional activities — intrinsic to many of the projects — have helped to raise interest and support for more considered planning and carefully elaborated policies, along with the search for development alternatives.

NGOs had an opportunity to assess their priorities and determine what needs to be done

Capacity development for NGOs in the region

Strengthening the capacity of NGOs to meet the challenges of contributing to sustainable development in their countries was a crucial programme objective. As a result of the programme, 87 Western Balkan NGOs were able to carry out projects of their own design addressing the priority development issues at the local and regional levels. Regional cooperation in project implementation facilitated the sharing of know-how and spread experience out across the region. The Balkan Ecovillage Network and Sustainable Development Network (SuDNet), both supported through the programme, proved to be efficient ways to involve more countries and stakeholders in cross-border cooperation and the sharing of information and know-how. The programme helped to establish and develop these networks, which will work beyond the project period.

Identification of priorities

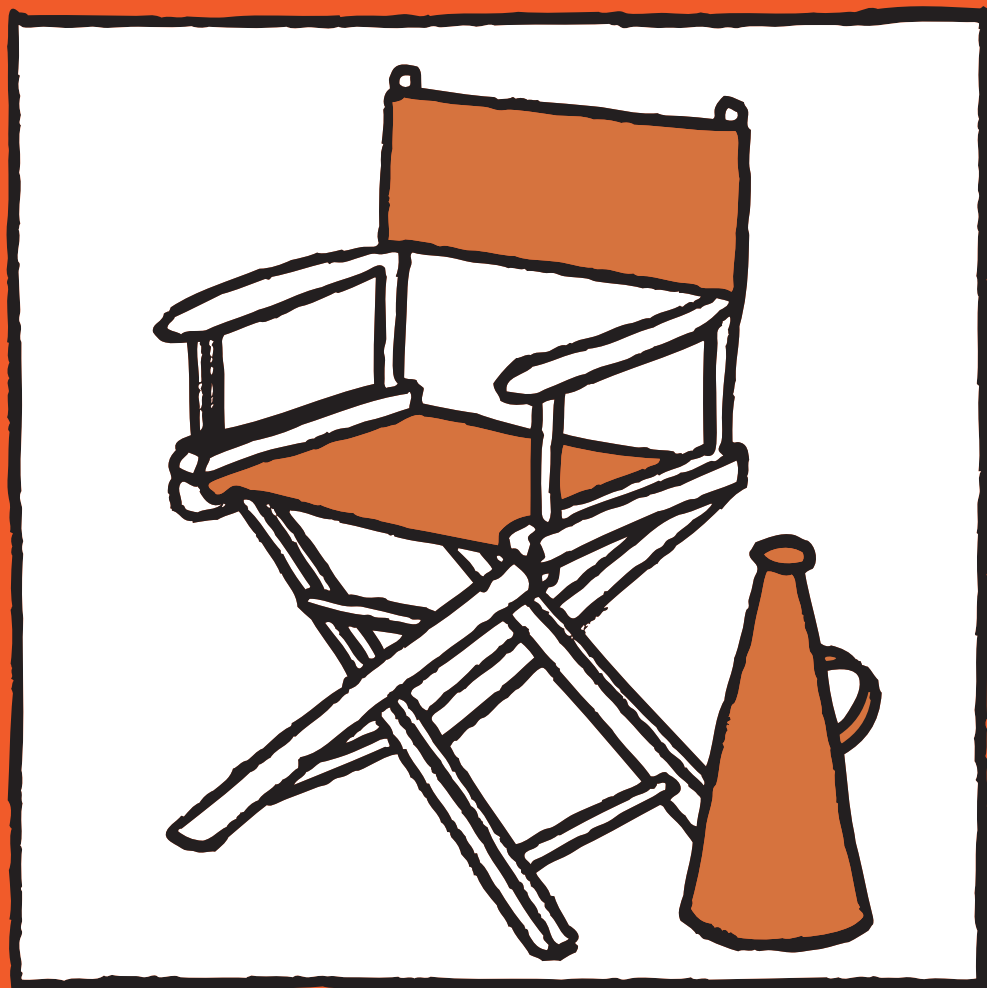
Development and its implications are very complex issues. The programme assisted NGOs and society in general to identify sustainable development priorities at the local and regional levels. From a Local Agenda 21 for the municipality of Veles in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to the promotion of the local economy through farming in Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration), the projects built on local needs and opportunities. The programme also helped to better define potential roles and space for NGO activities and, as such, NGOs had the opportunity, through practical activities, to assess their priorities and to determine what needs to be done, as well as the optimal means for reaching their targets.

Fostering cooperation at the state and local levels

Cooperation for sustainable development among stakeholders is a key challenge in the development and implementation of policies, plans, programmes or projects. One of the programme outcomes is an increase in cooperation among NGOs and other stakeholders at the national and regional levels, and stronger representation of NGO interests and opinions towards decision makers. An example of this is the broad campaign for NGOs in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in which the project initiated a wide coalition of stakeholders at the national and local levels. NGOs, municipalities, ministries and other stakeholders searched together for the best policies on genetically modified organisms.

Learning through regional cooperation

The Western Balkan region is divided by many national and ethnic borders, but is confronted by many challenges which do not respect these geo-political boundaries. NGOs from different countries in the SEE region were — and still are — working together on cross-border or region-wide sustainable development issues. The programme enabled the initiation of new trans-boundary cooperation or helped to enhance those already established by providing new content for them. A typical example is the cooperation between Albanian and Montenegrin NGOs in the protection of the cross-border Cijevna/Cemni River. In this project, the NGOs attempted to broaden environmental protection issues to cover the social and economic dimensions of sustainability for the region (see Annex 1 for more details on the project). Working together on cross-border issues, river protection or the promotion of organic farming has helped to build or reinforce already existing bridges between the countries and people divided by recent conflicts.



Moving Ahead: NGO Suggestions for the Future

NGO Suggestions for the Future

An evaluation seminar concluding this granting programme took place in November 2005 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. This meeting brought together approximately 30 grantees from both the regional and national elements of the programme to discuss the lessons learned within the projects and to develop recommendations for future possibilities of work. The meeting was also designed to allow for an exchange of experience among the NGOs and to further increase their contact; to illustrate good practices in terms of NGO actions for sustainable development; and to demonstrate the differences between actions at the regional and national levels.

The seminar lasted for two days, and included presentations from NGOs on their projects (for fact sheets on some of the success stories see Annex 1) and several facilitated sessions that were designed to elucidate the main lessons learned and the key recommendations. The process, results and conclusions of these sessions are summarised in the following sections. The conclusions constitute future possibilities for sustainable development in the Western Balkans and the activities NGOs can undertake to support them. They are a valuable resource for the setting up of future programmes and actions to support the involvement of NGOs in the promotion of sustainable development, as they represent the actual views and opinions of NGOs from South Eastern Europe.

Sustainable Futures: Defining the NGO Input

In order to make the discussions more manageable the participants were split into three thematic groups. These divisions corresponded to the main issues covered by the individual NGO projects:

- sustainable settlements and urban environments;
- rural development; and
- good governance as a tool for sustainable development.

These groups were then guided through a common exercise by dedicated facilitators.

Each group was asked to devise desirable scenarios for sustainability within their respective issue areas, and then identify some of the key drivers and barriers to progress from today's situation towards these desirable futures. Finally, each group attempted to define leverage points that NGOs could use to take advantage of the drivers and address any obstacles to success.

The purpose of this process was to pinpoint the main areas in which NGOs in the Western Balkans see their probable role in promoting and supporting sustainability. Such results can be useful for the development of cooperative efforts and for targeting support programmes for NGOs in the region. The results of these discussions are summarised by thematic group below. This is not an exhaustive list of all drivers, barriers and leverage points, but captures the outcomes of the meeting, and is meant to stimulate further dialogue and ideas among NGOs and their supporters.

FIGURE 4

Sustainable settlements and urban environment

VISIONS	DRIVERS	BARRIERS	NGO LEVERAGE POINTS
Environmentally sustainable and affordable transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public is tired of traffic congestion Costs of driving are increasing The price of public transport is improving (relatively) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated transport policies are lacking (due to lack of experience and expertise) Quality of public transport is low Lifestyles have changed and do not support sustainable transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of integrated transport policies which take a sustainable approach and involve all stakeholders
Good governance within municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some laws and regulations can be used to “force” local governments to respond to the public Success stories already exist that others can follow Public opinion is strongly in favour of improving municipal governance EU accession encourages good governance (through directives) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local governments generally have low capacity, particularly experience and skills Overall lack of public participation High amount of corruption in local government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on success stories should be shared Raising public awareness Encourage open and transparent decision-making processes
Green city (i.e. ecosystem friendly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laws and regulations supporting green cities already exist Public opinion demands a healthy environment People (i.e. lifestyles) are increasingly health conscious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many polluting industrial facilities are close to urban populations There is corruption in planning permission and illegal construction (often on green space) Low public awareness and appreciation for green space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To draft green agendas (i.e. policies) Encourage and support enforcement of laws and regulations Develop a network between NGOs, local authorities and other stakeholders
Local services and Infrastructure available within neighbourhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public demand for local services Successful examples from other towns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulations are lacking or counter-productive It is expensive to build schools, hospitals, etc. within neighbourhoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaigns to encourage provision of local services and businesses

FIGURE 4

Sustainable settlements and urban environment (continued)

VISIONS	DRIVERS	BARRIERS	NGO LEVERAGE POINTS
Sustainable natural resources management in the cities	Desire to live healthily and with a high quality of life	Low awareness/education among those managing resources Lack of strategies	Spread information on good practices
Socially integrated city with social and ethnic groups geographically interspersed	Public opinion (dissatisfied with the current situation) Success stories from other cities People want a high quality of life	Lack of understanding Policies of municipalities do not offer encouragement Growing economic disparities Prejudices often exist between different social, cultural and economic groups	Public awareness and campaigns within municipalities and for decision makers

Sustainable settlements and urban environment

Not surprisingly, NGOs felt future sustainability in urban areas hinged on two main areas, namely the reduction of environmental and health damage (i.e. ensuring sustainability in transport and reducing industrial pollution) and in social equity and governance (i.e. fairer societies and more open decision making). Thus the areas in which NGOs felt they could have most impact was in raising awareness among the public through campaigns; demonstrating positive examples from other cities; and also in supporting better decision making by ensuring the enforcement of laws, regulations, and planning and consultation processes.

FIGURE 5

Rural development

VISIONS	DRIVERS	BARRIERS	NGO LEVERAGE POINTS
People educated and aware of sustainable development	Society recognises the need for changes to the current system	Lack of clarity on who will educate the public and what the core of the messages should be Knowledge on sustainable development is often fragmented and poorly shared	NGOs can put together coherent messages and comprehensive information about sustainable development NGOs have the ability to share knowledge and techniques about sustainable development
People should think holistically (i.e. across different sectors)	Legislative measures exist to support this approach Small sustainable communities exist as examples and points of departure Integration of environmental aspects into sectoral policies is happening	Short-term interests and egotistic attitudes prevail Both educational and institutional systems are sectorally rooted Lack of support and awareness from all sectors	The formation of cross-sectoral institutions is required NGOs can advocate and lobby for change
Sustainable islands (i.e. communities at the forefront of sustainability) will be connected into a globally sustainable community, or global village, serving to the others as an example and target	“Islands” display good practices for sustainability More and more people are dissatisfied with the current system and desire a better quality of life Global movements for sustainable development exist	The global economy tends to work against “sustainable islands” and social justice	SEE NGOs can garner support from the global movement and networks, and contribute to them
Local needs will be satisfied by local resources as much as possible	Local needs exist and citizens are fulfilling them and benefiting from this	The global economy, market, and institutions tend to work against a more local approach	Creation and support of fair trade systems Teach people to use sustainable local resources
Social justice exists (fair share of benefits and burdens of resources and goods; equal rights)	People are increasingly aware of value of resources and of negative external costs	No equitable access to resources for many No recognition of external costs by many decision makers and members of the public	Push for subsidiarity as a local right Push for switch from GDP to alternative measurements of progress (i.e. NEW — Net Economic Welfare) as chief economic measurement

FIGURE 5

Rural development (continued)			
VISIONS	DRIVERS	BARRIERS	NGO LEVERAGE POINTS
Good quality of environment	Multi-lateral and multi-sectoral environmental agreements exist Drive for a good environment as a basic human right is becoming more prevalent	Existing patterns of production and consumption are not environmentally friendly	NGOs can innovate and promote best practices for use of resources
Conflict-free urban/rural and rural/global social and ecological relationships	Need for communication and cooperation recognised Awareness of common fate and future	Migrations — logic of big markets, no balance, no subsidiarity, centralised decision-making systems	Encourage solidarity through the formation of bodies such as community supported agriculture(CSAs)

Rural development

Under the theme of promoting sustainability in rural development, the key issues focused upon were raising public awareness of the issues, ensuring local control and the use of local resources, and ensuring a fair balance between rural and urban areas. While many drivers for these visions are present, the overriding demands of the global economy are highlighted several times as a major barrier. Indeed the very system of measurement of economic success was seen by the NGOs as a key point for change. Doing away with gross domestic product and bringing in net economic welfare as an alternative, for example. Other points for NGOs include: developing education and awareness on sustainability; utilising the strength, techniques and experience of global NGO networks locally; and helping rural communities to use resources more equitably and sustainably in practice.

FIGURE 6

Good governance¹ as a tool for sustainable development

VISIONS	DRIVERS	BARRIERS	NGO LEVERAGE POINTS
Clear roles, responsibilities and requirements for ministries, local authorities, NGOs, and private individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reliability required by the public Supporting legislation exists Monitoring of corruption already in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corruption Lack of skills High level of politicisation Weak institutions Unclear regulation Lack of democratic traditions 	Encourage cooperation and dialogue to achieve better understanding of roles, responsibilities and requirements
All actors with a high level of competence on sustainable development issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education systems are now considering sustainable development to some degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education systems are still not adequately organised to cover sustainability issues Low competence requirements for certain positions 	Improvement of school curriculum
Cooperation of all actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-ministerial working groups exist Robust NGO sector Multi-stakeholder approach increasingly encouraged Existing methodologies for integrated approaches Some cooperation strategies formulated Networking occurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflicts of interest exist Excessive bureaucracy Language differences Prejudices exist between stakeholders 	Creation of multi-stakeholder networks
Clear regulations for proper public participation, including involvement of vulnerable groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aarhus Convention principles exist (for all sectors), and should be implemented at appropriate levels Improving economy enables people more time and resources for participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low level of trust in government structures Poverty (prevents sections of the public from becoming involved) Existing legislation not implemented or followed Low level of awareness of appropriate decision-making processes High degree of pressure to avoid participatory principles and make decisions quickly 	Campaign for the integration of Aarhus Convention principles in all sectors

FIGURE 6

Good governance¹ as a tool for sustainable development (continued)

VISIONS	DRIVERS	BARRIERS	NGO LEVERAGE POINTS
Local self-governance	<p>People feel empowered</p> <p>Decentralisation happening in some cases</p> <p>Responsibilities are being handed over</p>	<p>Centralisation is pervasive</p> <p>Lack of resources and mechanisms for local decision making</p> <p>International agencies discouraged by working with national/bigger players</p> <p>Nationalism</p>	<p>Support decentralisation through concrete actions (e.g. public pressure for adoption of legal framework)</p>
Proper planning (e.g. Local Agenda 21)	<p>Proper planning and situation assessments are increasingly common</p> <p>Such planning tools are action-oriented and realistic</p>	<p>Often requires specialised expertise</p> <p>Institutional capacities often too low</p> <p>Low levels of result utilisation (i.e. implementation)</p> <p>Decision makers often focus on short-term results</p>	<p>Advocate and support Local Agenda 21 processes</p>
Free access to information and independent media	<p>Aarhus Convention (access to information) applied to sectors</p> <p>Vibrant civil society</p>	<p>General lack of information available</p> <p>Censorship of media occurs</p> <p>Low competence of media and information managers</p> <p>In practice Aarhus Convention implementation is often poor</p>	<p>Education of media</p> <p>Support media independence</p> <p>Aarhus promotion</p>
Existence of appropriate and enforceable legislation for sustainable development	<p>Some control mechanisms exist, including sanctions</p>	<p>EU standards are not always appropriate</p> <p>Shortage of data on current situation</p>	<p>Create good databases on legislation</p> <p>Encourage public participation in legislative processes</p>
Motivated public	<p>Conflicts between institutions and public</p> <p>Improving social situations</p>	<p>No rule of law</p> <p>Poverty</p> <p>Unstable political situations</p>	<p>Poverty reduction initiatives</p> <p>Education of public on legal systems</p> <p>Encourage the development of politically independent institutions and agencies, and civil service</p>
Fair access to resources	<p>Management of resources improving</p> <p>Better budgetary planning</p> <p>Standards and procedures set</p>	<p>Unequal distribution of goods</p> <p>Weak economy</p>	<p>Encourage transparency in budgeting</p>

Good governance as a tool for sustainable development

Good governance¹ is a cross-cutting topic, although it is important to cover this issue separately as it is commonly seen as a pre-condition to the implementation of effective sustainable development. As such, the NGOs focused their attention on the systems and requirements for good governance. Many hurdles have to be crossed to ensure a well-functioning state and sustainable development. These include: corruption, weak institutions, weak democratic traditions, prejudices between sectors and ethnic groupings, over-centralisation and weakly defined participation in decision-making processes. NGOs stressed their roles as drivers for dialogue between sectors (including the development of multi-stakeholder networks), pushing for greater adherence to the Aarhus principles and carrying out LA 21-type planning activities.

Actions Suggested by NGOs for a Sustainable Balkans

The “problem, drivers, barriers and leverage points” exercise helped participants to identify the concrete opportunities (i.e. leverage points) that they have to make positive impacts on the problems they feel their communities are facing. The next step was to consider how NGOs could take advantage of these leverage points most effectively. Participants were subsequently asked to identify how donors could best support their efforts.

Suggested approaches in different areas of sustainability

There are numerous approaches NGOs can take towards leverage points, although these must represent the correct approach to the specific situation. Matching the correct approach pre-supposes identifying what the objectives are, as different approaches are warranted if the objectives involve behaviour change rather than lobbying for governmental change, for example. Perhaps public participation is warranted in both cases, but this must be shaped by why the objective is being pursued.

FIGURE 7

Social marketing

“Social marketing is the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon certain behaviour for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole.”²

The principle reason for running a social marketing campaign is behaviour change, thus keeping the objective (i.e. behaviour to be changed) clear is central to success. The social marketing approach prescribes that the target audiences that you wish to change, or that will act as supporters in your efforts, be identified; that the barriers and benefits standing in the way, and encouraging the adoption of the desired behaviour change and

competing behaviours be identified; and that tools be deployed to weaken and strengthen the barriers and benefits in line with the objectives. Research and monitoring are important at every stage, as an accurate understanding of the target audiences and their behaviour is necessary.

Social marketing uses a variety of tools from various areas including information dissemination, advertising and the media, and education. It is not so much about the specific tools used, as it is the way each is applied and aligned with other tools to foster real behaviour change.

Participants grouped together leverage points under some general headings, and then identified some specific approaches for each. These are summarised below.

Campaigning for sustainable development — public behaviour change

Behaviour change is central to more sustainable communities, as many decisions that affect the environment, society and economy are made by individuals. Fostering behaviour change is very important for NGOs, as it is a niche in which they can be particularly active and effective. Unfortunately, NGOs identified that they run campaigns to foster behaviour change too infrequently. One approach to behaviour change that emerged was social marketing, which encompasses a set of tools that can help NGOs to frame their behaviour-change campaigns and make them successful. See **Figure 7** for more information on social marketing.

Information dissemination on sustainable development

NGOs felt that they are typically unfettered by the restrictions — whether legally mandated or self-imposed out of self-interest — that other stakeholders, such as governments and businesses, often face when it comes to disseminating information; this makes them particularly suited to the task. The challenges NGOs face include being heard (particularly as they typically lack the resources that other stakeholders have), being respected as legitimate, and formulating their messages in such a way that they resonate with the target audience.

The specific ways in which information dissemination can be manifested or supported include:

- disseminating positive models of sustainability through the media, collaborating with the media in the creation of materials, such as documentaries and features;
- educating journalists on sustainability and providing training on issues such as writing environmental news;
- sharing best practices with the media, decision makers and the general public; and
- distributing accurate information on the problems faced by communities.

Proper communications and public relations strategies are very important for NGOs, as defining messages and planning how to make communications effective and focused on these messages is central to being heard and interpreted in the way you intended. A good strategy outlines the messages, the channels through which they will be disseminated, who will disseminate them, and what will happen under different scenarios, such as negative press feedback on your campaign.

Education on sustainable development

Education differs from information dissemination in that it involves transferring a more substantial body of information and knowledge to the target audience, substantially changing their level of awareness and/or opinions on a given issue. Information dissemination tends to focus on getting key messages out to larger audiences, while education implies deeper learning relationships with smaller groups.

NGOs felt that they can play substantial roles in education for sustainable development, both directly as educators, and indirectly by supporting other educators as

NGOs felt that they can play substantial roles in education for sustainable development

they incorporate its principles into their work. NGOs can educate many different groups, including:

- policy makers and civil servants by, for example, introducing them to new approaches;
- local authorities, involving them in NGO projects, for example, so that they better understand problems and feel equipped and supported when tackling them; and
- small and medium-sized enterprises by introducing them, for example, to opportunities for cleaner production.

NGOs also have opportunities to affect change through the formal education system, particularly by supporting the implementation of sustainable development principles into school curricula. Grade school teachers typically have a period of time for discretionary activities, for which they are often looking for relevant and interesting materials. NGOs identified that they can exploit this time by providing teachers with materials that spread sustainable development messages among students. Alternatively, NGOs can play a more active role in filling this time by visiting classes and conducting activities, such as role plays or educational games, with students.

The principles of sustainable development are also important within the curricula of trade and professional schools, though this requires more technical knowledge on the part of NGOs wishing to support this. NGOs working on agriculture and rural development can, for example, work with agricultural schools, providing education on the development of small-scale local food systems. NGOs feel they are particularly well equipped for the facilitation of more practical exercises with either grade schools or professional and technical schools. These exercises could include study trips to view positive and negative case studies, and forums with practitioners and stakeholders. NGOs could utilise their direct relationship to the issues and those involved when undertaking such educational exercises.

Networking (between NGOs)

NGOs acknowledged that they are stronger when working together than when working alone, and have a great deal of knowledge and know-how that they can share with one another. Stronger NGOs can further their own goals and support other NGOs both locally and in other areas, by sharing their expertise and therefore the strength of those working for the same objectives. The most successful NGO networking is founded on specific issues and shared aims, and nurtured with real cooperation and the mutual exchange of information and experience.

Partnership building (with other stakeholders)

NGOs feel it is important to work not only with each other, but also with other stakeholders. Other stakeholders bring different strengths and opportunities for action into the equation, expanding the possibilities for fostering sustainability. NGOs can help other stakeholders to achieve more sustainability in their activities, or engage them in campaigns to encourage third parties to do so.

NGOs can create partnerships to achieve specific missions, acting as facilitators or match-makers. An example of this would be bringing together tourist organisations, local producers, the operators of local museums, and other stakeholders for local development. NGOs educate stakeholders and initiate partnerships by identifying common interests and opportunities for cooperation.

A common sentiment among participants is that relationships with governments and local authorities — especially the latter — are very important in terms of accomplishing objectives. These relationships can range from collaborative (partnerships) to confrontational, but require significant knowledge of the roles authorities play and how they can be steered towards acting more in line with the NGOs' objectives.

Lobbying for sustainable development

Lobbying tactics can be applied to pressure authorities to act in a certain way and usually involves an NGO spokesperson (or persons) persuading key decision makers to take a certain position on an issue. Lobbying requires access to the right people, skill in persuasion, and the information and arguments to back it up. Effective networks and partnerships are often required for successful lobbying, as strength is necessary.

NGOs also noted that they use information dissemination and community campaigns as lobbying tactics by co-opting local citizens to put pressure on decision makers. Petitions and letter-writing campaigns are commonly used tools.

Planning and public participation

The participation of citizens in the decision-making process, regardless of social class, ethnic group or gender, is a key cornerstone of good governance. NGOs pointed out that representative democracy does not necessarily mean that the concerns of the most vulnerable in society are automatically taken into consideration in decision making. NGOs may play a part in involving people in the processes of planning and decision taking, and fighting for their interests.

On the more collaborative side, NGOs noted that they can, and often do, cooperate with authorities, providing services to support their positive initiatives. NGOs often possess skills or a strategic position that makes them valuable to the authority. Facilitating Local Agenda 21 projects is a good example of how NGOs can get involved. Active involvement in the development of social, economic or environmental plans and policies is a way to influence development at the local, national and regional levels.

Watchdog

The relationships between NGOs and other stakeholders — whether governmental or in the private sector — are not always positive. While lobbying and collaborating can be useful, NGOs have reported that they are sometimes required to act as whistleblowers. In this role, NGOs monitor the activities of stakeholders and advocate for problems identified to be addressed. This requires NGOs to involve experts in the monitoring process, be perceived as capable and legitimate, and have adequate access for monitoring purposes.

Poverty and environment

NGOs admitted that they are often sectoral in nature, focusing specifically on environment or community development, for example. In reality, environmental, community-development, and other socio-economic concerns often overlap. The poor, for example, often suffer the most from environmental problems and frequently use natural resources unsustainably because of the lack of profitable alternatives. Sustainability implies considering problems and solutions from all dimensions concurrently. NGOs identified that they can work for both the environment and communities by:

**Facilitating
Local Agenda 21
projects is a
way for NGOs
to get involved**

The poor often suffer the most from environmental problems

- building environmental infrastructure at a human scale and to the benefit of the local communities;
- recognising links between poverty and destruction;
- running awareness projects on how environmental protection can generate income; and
- supporting fledgling environmental businesses.

Need for donor intervention

It is clear that NGOs have a variety of opportunities to affect change towards sustainability. For better or worse, many of these opportunities require either direct or indirect support from outside agencies and donors. These external support organisations can offer non-financial support by, for example, running training programmes to strengthen the NGOs or provide advice to NGOs as they formulate and run campaigns. Many activities also depend on funds from external donors.

The Sustainable Development in the Western Balkans seminar concluded with papers being distributed to participants, who were asked to write down the project ideas they had which would require funding from donors. The answers they gave, grouped by theme, included:

Education and information dissemination

- Promoting the notion of the environment's carrying capacities;
- Public awareness campaigns, using the media and other tools, and the promotion of sustainable development principles;
- Capacity building on sustainable development for universities;
- Development of educational materials, including school curricula, on sustainable development, and the incorporation of sustainable development into current educational programmes, particularly environmental education;
- Capacity building for local authorities and educating them by involving them in projects;
- Practical workshops for NGOs, including education and information on how to access EU funds;
- The development and presentation of workshops by NGOs to other stakeholders.

Networking

- The creation of cross-sectoral coalitions (social, environmental, developmental);
- Fostering regional (cross-border) cooperation for sustainability;
- Network capacity building (including coordination, meetings and promotional materials);
- Actions that involve cross-border cooperation based on common problems and efforts to solve them.

Local development and planning

- Projects that improve the economic situation where NGOs work;
- Projects that concretely improve environmental conditions and infrastructure within an area;
- Preparing strategies for sustainable development, Local Agenda 21 and other initiatives;
- Local Agenda 21 projects, particularly implementation activities;
- Creation of strategies for sustainable tourism for specific regions;
- Lobbying and the decentralisation of decision making;
- The promotion of public spaces and urban life;
- Creating pilot “green zones” or avenues within cities;
- Developing integrated and liveable streets;
- The development of bike paths;
- The implementation of “park and ride” systems in cities;
- Push for the pedestrianisation of downtown areas.

Farming and food

- Training for farmers on sustainable agriculture;
- Developing organic agriculture and creating more employment within the sector;
- Developing local markets for organic products and supporting sellers;
- Developing environmentally friendly packaging for organic products;
- Centres for the advancement of organic agriculture, testing, showcasing best practices, and educating others.

Other practical solutions

- Support for the implementation of tangible solutions, such as solar collectors and infrastructure for handicapped individuals;
- Seminar on practical techniques for addressing problems, such as phytoremediation;
- Promoting handicrafts and local products;
- Targeting companies and industrial pollution;
- Creating new jobs through the sustainable use of natural resources;
- Promotion of renewable energy use;
- Waste management and the removal of illegal dump sites;

**Networking:
The creation
of cross-sectoral
coalitions (social,
environmental,
developmental)**

- Introducing environmental laws to citizens;
- Promoting and training citizens on composting in local communities.

These suggestions reflect a broad grouping of possible interventions which donor support can look to cover. Clearly the NGO community of the region has both the awareness and the capacity to start addressing serious sustainable development issues. In conclusion, the participants also reflected positively on the granting programme and recommended that there be follow-up programmes.

References

- 1 Governance: formal/informal institutions that establish a system of responsibility and accountability in decision making to build trust and capacity to cooperate. S. Stec *personal communication*, 2006.
- 2 Philip Kotler, Ned Roberto and Nancy Lee. *Social Marketing: Improving the Quality of Life*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2002. Page 5.



Sustainability in Action: **Conclusions**

Sustainability in Action: Conclusions

While sustainable development has entered the focus of governments — including those of EU member states and Western Balkan states that aspire to join the EU in the future — true sustainability also requires bottom-up approaches, formulated and implemented at the local level. NGOs must play a central role in the move towards more sustainable societies at all levels, but particularly the local level. This is where NGOs are best equipped to instigate real initiatives that will make a difference, and this is the scale at which projects can change communities for the better.

The cross-border projects supported through the programme were also successful and added value, particularly as cooperation, peace and harmony are key components of sustainability. Cross-border projects in the Balkans do more than simply achieve their stated goals: they also foster cooperation and understanding across sometimes tense political, ethnic and cultural borders.

Experiences with the Developing Regional NGO Activities for Sustainable Development in the Western Balkans granting programme and associated seminar indicate that many NGOs in the region are working to move sustainability forward. There is, however, still a great deal to be done. It is evident that funding is still very much necessary to support initiatives, as local sources are insufficient, and that many organisations are not yet strong enough to maximise their impacts and require more development. This programme funded small projects that can serve as demonstrations and pilots for future activities, but much more is needed. Further granting programmes focusing on sustainable development are deemed necessary, as are further regional cooperation initiatives and trainings for organisations in such areas as effective campaigning, working with other stakeholders, the implementation of specific initiatives, and the notion of sustainability itself. This report provides specific suggestions for future granting programmes from NGOs, which should be taken into account.

One observation of the REC project team was that many more NGOs than expected were performing tasks traditionally fulfilled by other stakeholders, particularly local authorities. This included driving Local Agenda 21 processes, improving public transit systems, and even drafting policies. This phenomenon perhaps reflects the weak state of many local authorities, and that NGOs can play very influential roles. These more executorial roles bring advantages and disadvantages; NGOs are much more able to shape processes in these situations, but may give up some of their advocative roles, and are allowing authorities to abdicate responsibilities that should belong to them. Future initiatives should recognise the presence of these strong relationships, and the importance of them.

Many organisations involved in the granting programme and closing seminar have complex views on sustainability, and are more than capable of looking at the big picture. Some organisations working on organic agriculture, for example, have gone beyond

considering organics as merely an environmental issue, and are focusing on the broader food system questions and promoting organics as a means for not only a healthier environment and diet for consumers, but for local grassroots economic development and the preservation of traditions and local vitality.

On the other hand, sustainability remains an extremely vague term, which is interpreted in many different ways. Some projects, as is the case with most initiatives for sustainability, could have gone further to move beyond narrow sectoral concerns and solutions to more holistic ones. In the future, the organisations supported need to be further motivated to work beyond their traditional areas of interest when considering issues and developing projects.

This document shares the experiences that the NGOs funded under the Developing Regional NGO Activities for Sustainable Development in the Western Balkans granting programme, along with the project team, had while implementing projects, and the outcomes of the closing seminar. It sheds light on where opportunities lie for NGOs to further sustainability and how donor and support agencies can work with NGOs to increase their success. It is not intended to be an exhaustive examination of how NGOs tackle sustainability in the region, but it does give some clear indications of what is happening, and what more needs to be done.

It is now up to NGOs and their supporters to make these initiatives happen and push the Western Balkan region towards a more sustainable balance — for the environment, for citizens, and for a healthy and prosperous future.

Annex

Concrete Action at the Regional and Local Levels: Fact Sheets of 14 Selected Projects

This annex contains information about the following projects:

- Integrated Approach to Solving Traffic-Related Problems from a Sustainable Aspect
- Balkan Environmental Network
- Sudnet: Sustainable Development Network
- Sustainable Development of Cijevna/Cemni River
- Local Agenda 21 for Sustainable Development of Subotica and Tuzla
- South East Europe — Paving the Way to a GM-Free Zone
- Phytoremediation — Cleaning of Heavy Metals from the Soil
- Conservation of Traditional Cheese Production in the Tuzla Area
- Promotion of Sustainable Tourism in Kozara National Park
- Transition from Conventional to Organic Agriculture
- Education, Public Participation and Promotion of Sustainable Development Principles in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton
- Local Agenda 21 for the Municipality of Veles
- Developing Small Economy through Farming in Kosovo (Territory Under Interim UN Administration)
- Initiatives for Legislation and Raising Public Awareness for Genetically Modified Organisms in the former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia



Integrated Approach to Solving Traffic-Related Problems from a Sustainable Aspect

Type of grant: Regional (REC HO)

Lead NGO: Proaktivna (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

Partner NGO: Serbian Town Planners Association (SCG)

Project background

Proaktivna, an NGO based in Skopje, and the Serbian Town Planners Association (STPA) from Belgrade, address traffic-related problems in their daily activities as one of the major threats to environmental quality, human health and natural resources depletion. The emission of harmful gases and particulates from transport is one of the primary reasons for air pollution in Skopje and Belgrade. Transport is also culpable for other serious urban issues including noise, vibration, visual (aesthetic) degradation and the usurpation of space. Increased use of individual vehicles translates into traffic congestion, lower average speeds, longer times required to go between two points, increased use of natural resources and further emission of pollutants. Despite harsh economic conditions in the countries and the increasing monetary costs of private vehicle use, the car remains synonymous with success and will therefore continue to increase in number, unless this perception is changed.

Project goal

The overall goal was to promote more sustainable communities, particularly with regards to transport.

Project objectives

- Through joint cooperation between key stakeholders, to raise public awareness about transport-related consequences and their impact on the environment, the economy and human health;
- To promote public transport and alternative modes of transport;
- To initiate change in the perception of private vehicle use.

Amount awarded

The project was awarded a grant of EUR 21,710.

Implementation

The project was implemented through the following stages and activities:

- conducting surveys in both cities — gathering and analysing data about transport and traffic-related problems from environmental, economic and social aspects;

- organisation of meetings — improving communication and cooperation among major transportation enterprises and stakeholders;
- networking — bringing together NGOs working towards sustainable development and developing eco-villages;
- organisation of seminars — educating stakeholders' representatives about the sustainable principles in the field of urban planning and transport;
- raising public awareness about the consequences of traffic emissions;
- creation and publication of pocket-sized bus maps/timetables;
- creation of a bike map for the central city area in Skopje and Belgrade; and
- close work with the media.

Raising public awareness about the consequences of traffic emissions

Target group

The main target groups of this project were the business sector (public transport enterprises and private transport companies), local and central governments and the citizens of both cities.

Achievements

The project team achieved the following:

- Analysed questionnaire results published on the following websites: <www.proaktivna.org.mk> and <www.urbs.yu>. The aim was to ascertain information about public knowledge of the problems caused by excessive traffic, how traffic relates to air quality, about citizens' expectations of public transportation and their behaviour and attitudes towards traffic congestion. In Skopje, 254 citizens were interviewed and 510 in Belgrade.
- Created 5,000 flyers in each country about raising public awareness and peoples' responsibilities.
- Disseminated information through mass media — over 30 articles were published in newspapers, around 10 television reports and more than 70 radio reports were broadcast.
- Created project web pages.
- Created and distributed over 30,000 bus maps/timetables in each country.
- Created bike maps and distributed them through a weekly magazine (Skopje) and as stand-alone publications (5,000) in Belgrade.
- Created a pilot project: A Better Place for Living — A Sustainable Approach to Urban Design (Belgrade only). The pilot project was presented to representatives of different institutions and local municipalities in Belgrade and Skopje and received a great deal of positive feedback. The coordinator of this activity presented the project at the Traffic Faculty in Bitola, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and at the international conference Life in Urban Landscape, held in Gothenburg, Sweden from May 29 to June 3, 2005.

- Media campaign Drive Your Neighbours, Drive Your Colleagues — created comic art which was published in four magazines (Skopje); Park & Ride — created and distributed flyers through newspapers (Belgrade).

Project results can be useful for further development of the sustainable strategy for relieving traffic and transport problems in the involved cities (and possibly others). As an output, the project created a document “guidelines/recommendations”, which can serve for the future development of sustainable strategies to solve traffic-related problems. The document can serve as a basis for further development of the sustainable strategy for relieving traffic and transport problems in cities. It is very important that all collected and analysed information is turned into recommendations for the development of a real strategy that will concern the sources of transport problems.

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Balkan Environmental Network

Type of grant: Regional (REC HO)

Lead NGO: Green Network of Alternative Groups (Croatia)

Partner NGO: EIA-NGO for Ecology and Culture (Croatia), Kneja (Croatia), Action for Animal Rights (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Project background

The Balkan Environmental Network (BEN) addresses several problems in the region concerning sustainable development. These problems are a common situation for all Western Balkan countries. Apart from Albania, all countries have experienced war in the recent past, so they are confronted with all the obstacles to sustainable development that are usual in a post-war period and in the region. The main problems in the region that prompted the need for this project are:

- environmentally unfriendly development policies, justified by the need for quick development, return of investment, or escape from under-development;
- lack of concrete investments in sustainable development projects;
- lack of knowledge and proper education about sustainable development;
- rise of unsustainable consumerist behaviour; and
- social and economic consequences of wars in the region.

These problems continue to be significant while the processes of transition and globalisation are rampant across the entire region, bringing new threats to the implementation of sustainable development. These include:

- dependence on external markets (policy against “food sovereignty” and the rise of social inequality);
- citizens feel highly insecure and marginalised, with economic pressure to leave rural areas and move into the cities;
- depopulation of rural areas and the spread of urban slums; and
- rising poverty and frustration in rural areas: isolation, deterioration of social connections, dependence of unsustainable inputs in agriculture, and unsustainable rural development.

Project goal

The goal of this project was to develop a network of educational centres for permaculture and environmentally friendly technologies in the Western Balkans region: the use of renewable energy sources, the use of natural and re-used construction materials, organic food and cosmetics production, preservation of biodiversity and agrobiodiversity, re-use of waste materials and waste recycling. Through two main educational foci — a permaculture



The project allowed the spread of practical knowledge and skills for sustainable living in the region

course and eco-village training — members and stakeholders gained know-how and skills that transformed into tangible environmentally friendly technologies.

Project objectives

- To increase capacity and level of cooperation among organisations in the region;
- To develop the educational services, training curricula and criteria for network membership;
- To conduct analyses of existing legislation in the field of design of sustainable human settlements and prepare policy recommendations;
- To present the services and know-how available through the network to a range of stakeholders.

Amount awarded

The project was awarded a grant of EUR 31,050.

Implementation

Strategies used during the project include:

- Education: Permaculture Course, Eco-village Creation and Management Training, Bio-fuels Workshop (targets: BEN members, interested stakeholders, general public);
- With educational methods, the project allowed the spread of practical knowledge and skills for sustainable living in the region;
- Network capacity building: The development of training curricula and criteria for network membership; the foundation of BEN; meetings and gatherings; openness for stakeholders; mutual help between BEN's members. The main impacts of this process were two-fold. First, the creation of a network with a legal structure, official goals and objectives. Second, the process of capacity building was also supported through initiatives generated by the BEN project (i.e. joint workshop, mutual visits and help, sharing of educational tools and skills, etc.);
- Promotion and production of materials: the BEN website, paper analysis and recommendations on legislation for sustainable human settlements; participation in 3 World Environmental Education Congress (WEEC); publication of the book *Do It Yourself Green: Practical Paths Towards Sustainability*.

The main goal of this strategy was the presentation of BEN to stakeholders and the public. Products of this process were also used as educational tools.

Target group

The main target groups of this project were organisations that work on sustainable development, including environmental NGOs, youth organisations, farmer's cooperatives,

and local initiatives. Within promotional activities, target groups included state and local government authorities, other parts of civil society and the general public.

Achievements

In addition to network development, capacity building of network members, information, skills and sharing of know-how throughout the region, the project has had several practical outputs:

- Practical courses, trainings and workshops: 72 people from region now hold certificates.
- BEN is now a registered and well-established network, with 14 fully active members, dozens of stakeholders, and membership in the Global Ecovillage Network. BEN maintains the website <www.ekosela.org>, and has issued a multi-media CD about itself.
- Public events: 7th International Permacultural Convergence (7IPC), open debate about eco-buildings, and 3 WEEC, Turin 2005.
- Prepared and finished recommendations for the regulation of natural resources and re-use of building materials, with support from foreign and national experts.
- Publication of the book *Do It Yourself Green: Practical Paths Towards Sustainability*.

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SuDNet Sustainable Development Network

Type of grant: Regional (REC HO)

Lead NGO: Eko Liburnia (Croatia)

Partner NGOs: Eko-Agro Ohrid Macedonia and EKOPOT (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Project background

The SuDNet Sustainable Development Network project aimed to formulate a new common strategy on local sustainable development (i.e. Local Agenda 21) through networking and exchange of experience among NGOs and other stakeholders from different countries, with an emphasis on the promotion and development of “green entrepreneurship.” The project was jointly implemented by three NGOs: lead partner Eko Liburnia, Croatia (HR); Eko-Agro Ohrid, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and Ekopot, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The SuDNet project introduced a new methodology of sustainable local development through the promotion and development of environmentally and socially acceptable economic activities in at least three project municipalities (one in each country) within three selected project regions: County Primorsko-Goranska, Croatia; the southern part of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and Tuzla Canton, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The basic reasons for the creation and start of this project within selected regions were very much the same as the principal problems faced during implementation:

- The concept of sustainable development is almost unknown within the project’s regions.
- There is a lack of awareness about the economic value of a clean environment.
- There is weak public participation in development decisions.

Project goal

The principal goal of the SuDNet project was to develop a common sustainable development concept to be implemented within three participating regions/countries through the commencement of at least three Local Agenda 21 processes in selected pilot municipalities (one in each region/country).

Project objectives

- To create awareness about sustainable development principles among the population, decision makers and potential stakeholders in the region through various promotion and training activities;
- To start the process of partnership and networking among NGOs and other sustainable development stakeholders from the three participating regions/countries, leading to improved understanding and further cooperation at the end of the project;

- To promote principles and techniques of environmentally and socially acceptable economic activities (i.e. ecotourism, organic food production, use of renewable energy sources, etc.) through selection, training and assistance to the existing and potential “green entrepreneurs” from the three regions/countries;
- To formulate and promote national standards on eco-agritourism based on sustainable development concepts and include obligatory and facultative requirements concerning: certified organic food and drinks; certified organic textiles and eco-furniture; use of renewable energy sources; hospitality; environmental education; sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage, etc. Eko Liburnia signed the Protocol of Cooperation with AIAB in 1997 and was able to use the standards without legal restrictions.

Amount awarded

The project was awarded a grant of EUR 34,991.

Implementation

Project activities were divided into two project phases.

In Phase I (July 2004 to March 2005) the focus was on the following activities:

- Preliminary activities comprising of: data collection and analysis; selection of pilot municipalities; project promotion among the local population, potential stakeholders and media; and preparation of the First SuDNet Workshop (July-September 2004);
- First SuDNet Workshop, comprising the training of project partners and stakeholders on the Local Agenda 21 process and environmentally friendly economic activities (Ohrid, October 2004);
- First SuDNet Workshop follow-up activities consisting of: holding two local workshops per region/country aimed at local stakeholders; and performing a project inquiry using the questionnaire jointly developed by partners during the Ohrid workshop (November 2004 to February 2005);
- First project evaluation during which all of the workshops’ results and filled-in questionnaire analysis was finalised and commented on by the project team in order to select project beneficiaries (March 2005).

In Phase II (April 2005 to October 2005) the following steps were undertaken:

- Second SuDNet Workshop, comprising the training of project partners on providing business advisory assistance to “green entrepreneurs” (Crikvenica, Croatia, April 2005);
- Second SuDNet Workshop follow-up activities consisting of: assistance to project-selected beneficiaries in “green businesses” plan preparation; and formulation of the Local Agenda 21 processes in all selected pilot municipalities (May-July 2005);
- Second project evaluation consisting of: finalisation of all project-assisted business plans; and preparation of the Third SuDNet Workshop (August 2005);

Twenty-eight potential 'green entrepreneurs' were assisted or trained

- Third SuDNet Workshop: establishment of SuDNet (Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina, September 2005).

Target group

- Project partners (NGOs) and their local stakeholders (other NGOs, private companies, development agencies, etc.) — training and capacity building;
- Pilot municipalities (Ohrid, Gevgelija and Kratovo in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Gradacac and Kladanj in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Rijeka, Delnice, Novalja and Krk in Croatia) — starting of Local Agenda 21 processes;
- Potential “green entrepreneurs” — business assistance and training.

Achievements

- Local Agenda 21 (LA 21) processes: the LA 21 process continued in Rijeka and Crikvenica (Croatia); new LA 21 process started in Krk (Croatia), Ohrid (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and Gradacac and Kladanj (Bosnia and Herzegovina); and Aalborg Charter to be signed jointly in 2006.
- Eco-agritourism standards: existing AIAB standards translated from Italian into Croatian and Macedonian and presented during the Ohrid workshop and six local workshops; in Croatia, eco-agritourism standards included into on-going EU CARDS project (Regina implementation); in Bosnia and Herzegovina eco-agritourism standards included into on-going EU CARDS project (Bread & Salt implementation); in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia eco-agritourism standards presented to the relevant ministries.
- Potential “green entrepreneurs” assisted: a total of 28 entrepreneurs assisted/trained, business plans completed for nine of them (organic food production, ecotourism).
- Project partners capacity building: nine people (three per NGO) trained to provide business assistance in green entrepreneurship. Project partners already implementing four similar EU CARDS-funded development projects (Regina and Success in Croatia, Bread & Salt and Green Paper in Bosnia and Herzegovina) and two new projects following on the project activities are being prepared in Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

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Sustainable Development of the Cijevna/Cemni River Area

Type of grant: Regional (REC HO)

Lead NGO: Network for Affirmation of the NGO Sector — MANS (SCG)

Partner NGOs: Green Home (SCG), Albanian Association for Environment and Education (Albania)

Project background

The Cijevna/Cemni River begins close to the village of Zatrijebac in Albania, crosses the Montenegrin border and after about 20 kilometres discharges into the Moraca River. An Albanian minority live in the proximity of the river's upper basin (i.e. the villages of Dinosa, Miljes and Kuce Rakica), while Montenegrins live in the area surrounding the river's lower reaches. The Cijevna/Cemni River is one of the cleanest rivers in the region.

A significant number of waste disposals were recently established close to the Cijevna/Cemni River, which could affect the health of citizens living in the area as well as change the landscape of the river's banks. Also, the behaviour of business — especially oil companies based close to the river — constitutes a significant threat to the health of population, which drinks water directly from the river.

People living in this area are poor and generate their income mainly through the use of natural resources. It is well established that the fulfilment of social and economic rights is a pre-condition for the exercising of political and civil rights; therefore citizens are not motivated to participate in the development of policies. In addition, when generating income poor people do not take into account the long-term effects of inadequate use of natural resources and they are unaware of the importance of the sustainable use of these resources.

An additional problem is the lack of communication between different communities. This results in a lack of joint efforts to deal with problems confronting the communities, as well as a lack of strategy to resolve such issues. Resource management represents a serious threat to sustainable development in this area. It is therefore necessary to raise awareness and mobilise different stakeholders including citizens themselves to establish information-sharing mechanisms and develop recommendations for sustainable development of this area and to provide a model for cross-border cooperation in other countries.

Project goal

The project aimed to contribute to the sustainable development of cross-border regions through supporting public participation in decision making, multi-ethnic dialogue, capacity building, networking and cooperation of all stakeholders, thereby providing a model for other regions.

Project objectives

- To raise awareness among the general population about the importance of participation in decision making and the sustainable use of natural resources; to establish a



A model for cross-border cooperation on sustainable development

base for the sustainable development of the Cijevna/Cemni River area through awareness-raising activities; participatory identification of problems and possible solutions; the establishment of a multi-stakeholders working group; development of the recommendation for sustainable development of the targeted area as a basis for the development of Local Agenda 21; and the advocacy for the ratification of recommendations in local parliaments in both Montenegro and Albania;

- To support and promote cross-border and in-country networking and capacity building of all stakeholders dealing with sustainable development issues as well as of communities affected by related problems, through training, collection and joint analysis of information, development of information-sharing services, organisation of multi-stakeholders workshops and bilateral meetings; development of basic principles for cooperation among NGOs and between NGOs and other stakeholders, multi-stakeholders working groups and joint advocacy campaigns, thereby creating a solid basis for the development of Local Agenda 21;
- To develop a model for cross-border cooperation of stakeholders' groups on issues related to sustainable development through continuous cooperation with all stakeholders from different regions of Montenegro and Albania, promoting best practices and sharing experiences.

Amount awarded

The project was awarded a grant of EUR 20,000.

Implementation

Implementation was based on the participation approach and tried to involve all stakeholders in both countries — including the community, state and non-state organisations — in the process of decision making in favour of the Cijevna/Cemni River. All of the above were project beneficiaries, as the project developed capacities and supported cooperation among all stakeholders.

Stakeholders participated in the following project activities:

- training for stakeholders;
- printed and e-newspapers — stakeholders provided information about their activities as well as on existing information sources, and gained information on the activities and experiences of others;
- workshops for stakeholders, providing information on and developing recommendations for information sharing, cooperation and sustainable development policies;
- workshops for NGOs, which developed recommendations for codes of conduct, discussed joint initiatives, and established a basis for in-country and cross-country networking;
- working groups — stakeholders were represented by members of five working groups;
- public debates — stakeholders participated as members of working groups and as participants;

- bilateral meeting — both Albanian and Montenegrin stakeholders participated and discussed a range of issues related to planning for sustainability; and
- awareness-raising activities and lobbying in local governments — stakeholders were actively engaged in developing and implementing campaigns, including participation in major events and lobbying for ratification of recommendations in both parliaments.

Target group

Communities living close to the Cijevna/Cemni valley; state and non-state institutions dealing with environmental, social and economic affairs related to sustainable development and able to influence the decision-making process.

Achievements

This project resulted in the following outputs:

- one member from each of the three partner NGOs and two stakeholders trained in citizen participation methodology;
- workshop for stakeholders from Montenegro gathered about 15 participants;
- workshop for stakeholders from Albania gathered about 15 participants;
- two workshops for NGOs from Montenegro gathered about 10 NGOs each;
- two workshops for NGOs from Albania gathered about 10 NGOs each;
- two established working groups gathered 10 members (five from Montenegro and five from Albania), organising a total of four meetings;
- two public debates organised, with about 30 participants each;
- recommendations introduced to local parliaments in Albania and Montenegro; and
- bilateral meeting organised, with at least 30 participants from both countries.

In addition, this project developed the following products:

- development priorities for the Cijevna/Cemni River area identified by five communities;
- printed newspaper weekly distributed to at least 30 stakeholders;
- daily updated e-newspaper;
- listserv for stakeholders from both countries;
- multi-stakeholders recommendations on information sharing, cooperation and for sustainable development policies in Montenegro and Albania;
- recommendations for codes of conduct for both countries;
- recommendations for NGO networking including structure, membership criteria and procedures in both countries;

- recommendations for sustainable development of the Cijevna/Cemni River area evolved using consensus of all stakeholders including communities in both countries; and
- at least 3,000 leaflets and brochures distributed.

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Local Agenda 21 for Sustainable Development of Subotica and Tuzla

Type of grant: Regional (REC HO)

Leading NGO: TERRA'S Association (SCG)

Partner NGO: Center for Ecology and Energy (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Project background

Local Agenda 21 is an international concept to promote sustainable development on the local and regional level. The problem addressed by the project was the lack of information about the LA 21 process and the concept of sustainable development. The project implementing organisations consider this as a serious problem as these concepts are those that should serve as the basis for future development plans and strategies everywhere in the world. Not only the directly involved prospective negotiating partners of these processes are expected to be informed about the issues related to them, but also the wider public that should be assured access to information and participation in the decision making processes when comes to concrete actions.

Both Tuzla and Subotica as municipalities have made their first steps towards sustainability through the introduction of the LEAP processes to municipalities, the methodology of which is very similar to that of the LA 21 process. At the start of the project this was thought this to be an advantage, but — perhaps because both concepts are relatively new to the area — in the course of the project implementation there were certain difficulties in explaining to people about the LA 21, as they keep mixing it up with the LEAP process and could not see the difference immediately. It was actually a difficulty faced but a very useful one as it pointed out the importance of the information campaign.

The project initiated LA 21 processes in Subotica and Tuzla. After data collection and an awareness-raising campaign, the partner NGOs brought together the key stakeholders in each of the municipalities to introduce the concept of sustainable development and set up a draft of their Local Agenda 21 documents. The project concluded with a regional dissemination meeting at which the stakeholders of the involved municipalities met to share their experiences and concerns as well as to discuss the follow-up involving other municipalities from the participating regions.

Project goal

To contribute to the development of Local Agenda 21 documents in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), particularly Subotica and Tuzla and thus put these countries/municipalities on the road towards sustainability.

Project objectives

- Raise public awareness about Local Agenda 21 and sustainable development in general in Voivodina Province and Tuzla Canton;



- Test the power of the local media in investigating and addressing local problems from the grassroots level in Subotica as an input for the LA 21 draft;
- Initiate the development of LA 21 documents in Subotica and Tuzla.

Amount awarded

The project was awarded a grant of EUR 19,991.

Implementation

The project was implemented through the following steps:

- Data collection — Using various methods (e.g. the Internet, other organisations), data were collected about the notion of the LA 21 sustainable development process. Also, discussions were held with citizens (i.e. local communities, via live radio programmes etc.), and on the basis of their proposals and the collected information the draft strategies for both cities were formulated.
- Serbia media campaign — In Subotica radio jingles and TV spots, films and programmes in Hungarian and Serbian were made and broadcast, informing citizens about the project and the importance of LA 21. In their respective cities, representatives of both associations were invited to live programmes on the broadcast media, at which citizens were able to give their proposals for the draft documents linked to sustainable development. The information was disseminated via the media and the websites of the two NGOs.
- Local seminars on LA 21 in Subotica and Tuzla — In both cities local seminars were organised, with the participation of NGO representatives, experts from various fields, local authorities, etc. The seminars outlined the project, LA 21 and the notion of sustainable development. The proposals of seminar participants were taken into account when the draft documents were drawn up for both cities.
- Regional seminar on LA 21 — The seminar hosted participants from Tuzla and Subotica, while keynote lectures were held by experts from Belgrade (Serbia) and Osijek (Croatia). The contents of both documents relating to LA 21 were presented and this was followed by a discussion.
- Developing draft documents and printing the LA 21 brochure of Subotica and Tuzla — Based on the data collected in the field (i.e. from local communities), through the media, at seminars, and in cooperation with the Subotica and Tuzla local government representatives, the draft documents for both cities were formulated. Thereafter, a brochure was printed, which was distributed to citizens at public places and was handed out to those representatives of municipalities who are in charge of coordinating the process of drafting the Development Strategy of Subotica and the LEAP of Tuzla.

Target groups

Local municipalities, decision makers, NGOs and the general public in Tuzla (BiH) and in Subotica (SCG) were the primary targets for the project activities.

Achievements

The most important result of the project was that it initiated the drafting of documents related to sustainable development in Subotica and Tuzla. These documents will take into consideration the drafts that were compiled during this project. The proof of the project's success is that representatives of both organisations were included in the development of these documents. The project also enabled the participation of citizens in the development of plans and policies and allowed better access to decision-making processes and thus contributed to raising awareness about the importance of sustainable development and LA 21, which was one of the project's set goals.

Various products were developed in the project process:

- a brochure on LA 21 distributed to relevant stakeholders;
- a TV spot on LA 21 (in both Serbian and Hungarian), broadcast on local stations;
- a radio jingle on LA 21 (in both Serbian and Hungarian), used for promotional activities at radio stations;
- a film on LA 21;
- TV programmes on the local problems in Subotica, all in both Serbian and Hungarian;
- individual drafts of LA 21 for both Tuzla and Subotica, which will serve as full agendas for the development planned as follow-up activities to this project; and
- work material on LA 21 in Serbian and Hungarian, serving as background information and material for the planned development at the local level.

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The project enabled the participation of citizens in the development of plans and policies



South East Europe — Paving the Way to a GM-free Zone

Type of grant: Regional (REC HO)

Lead NGO: Shoqata e Bujqesise Organike/Organic Agriculture Association (Albania)

Partner NGO: Zelena Akcija/Green Action (Croatia)

Project background

The aim of this project was to show that biotech represents an extension and entrenchment of unsustainable agricultural practices, and that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) will undermine national food sovereignty and food security in the region if introduced — whether deliberately or accidentally — into agricultural systems. The project aimed to coordinate NGO activities at the regional level and establish local initiatives for GMO-free zones, thus leading to cross-border designated areas. The project also promoted organic farming as a way to preserve and enhance rural development and to maintain and nurture agricultural and natural biodiversity.

Expected outcomes were:

- trained key personnel, who would be ready to independently start and lead GMO campaigns in their respective countries;
- development of a campaign toolkit that contained both printed and electronic information materials;
- checklist and brief report on the state of GMOs and organic farming in the project countries, developed in the local languages;
- development of guidelines as to the content of stringent GMO legislation, to be distributed among decision makers in the project countries;
- testing for the presence of GMOs in food products in Croatia, and results reported to various stakeholders and the media; and
- charters and statements calling for GMO-free countries to be endorsed by local authorities.

Project goals

The goal of this project was to demonstrate that biotechnology represents an extension and entrenchment of unsustainable agricultural practices, and that GMOs can undermine national food sovereignty and food security in the region if introduced — whether deliberately or accidentally — into agricultural systems.

Project objectives

The project had four main objectives:

- public awareness;
- lobbying for effective legislation;

- monitoring of legislation implementation; and
- promoting GMO-free zones.

Amount awarded

The project was awarded a grant of EUR 35,000.

Implementation

The project was implemented through various activities aimed at addressing the four project objectives.

Objective 1 — Public awareness

In Albania public awareness was achieved through published articles and TV broadcasts. The Organic Agriculture Association (OAA) not only actively participated in the workshop organised by the Ministry of Environment on the framework of the bio-safety protocol (Risk Assessment and Risk Management), but also made public the common conclusion that participants agreed upon the OAA's proposal of a temporary ban on GMOs.

In Montenegro the project team organised two seminars. At the seminar in Pljevlja 27 farmers attended, while 24 farmers attended the Cetinje seminar, bringing the total number of participants to 51.

In Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration), project partner Organic Agriculture Association of Kosovo (SHBOK) led an intensive public campaign, which played an important role in informing people about GMOs.

In Croatia, Green Action was very active during the project, successfully campaigning for a group of local environmental NGOs in the country — including Eko-Zadar — to issue a GM-free declaration. The response from the general public during the process of collecting signatures was very positive, making it clear that information on GMOs has reached a very wide audience.

Objective 2 — Lobbying for effective legislation

Green Action prepared a list of elements of effective GMO legislation, which was distributed to all project participants and to groups who requested the list in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey. The list is also available at <www.zelena-akcija.hr/ge/index.html#GMOtoolkit>. Green Action formed an informal NGO alliance for campaigning on GMO-free zones and organised a training session Communicating about GMOs in September 2005. In Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration) SHBOK sent a letter to official institutions requesting the approval of a law for the protection of consumers.

Objective 3 — Monitoring the implementation of legislation

It was satisfying to note that the investigation organised by Green Action showed that none of the selected products contained any trace of GMO material in Croatia. This suggests that Croatian companies are taking the issue relatively seriously.

Objective 4 — Promoting GMO-free zones

Out of 21 Croatian counties, 11 have now declared themselves GMO-free, which is a huge success. The most recent declarations came from Slavonski Brod/Posavina County and Zadar County. For those counties which have yet to declare themselves GM-free zones, Green Action also sent a letter to the new county prefects who were elected during the local elections in May, asking them to make such a declaration. Other NGOs have been invited to join Green Action in writing to these prefects.

In Albania the six communes that are declared GMO-free zones are performing well. Monitoring there shows that the ban works. However, it should be emphasised that it is widely accepted that Albania will not cultivate GMOs for either production or experimentation.

Target groups

The project's target groups include decision makers at the ministries and the central, regional and local authorities; farmers, and the general public.

Achievements

The South East Europe — Paving the Way to a GM-free Zone project can be considered a success.

As a leading country of the project, Albania succeeded in finally channelling the legal framework on GMOs towards EU legislation. In practical terms, due to the fact that Albania has ratified the Cartagena Protocol on the one hand, and that the public is generally against GMOs on the other, there is still no cultivation of GMOs in Albania. Thus Albania can be considered a GMO-free country — even if there may be some GM feed on the market by accident. During the project period, the national legal framework on bio-safety was further elaborated, and the risk assessment and risk management of GMOs was intensively discussed.

In Croatia, Green Action made a valuable contribution to meeting each of the objectives outlined in the project proposal. Although it is difficult to assess exactly how much Green Action's activities raised public awareness, it is reasonable to expect that the combination of the film festival, the book launch and lectures, workshops, the circulation of the open letter, the leaflets and signature collections must have reached several thousand people directly, and an even larger audience indirectly through the media.

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Phytoremediation — Cleaning of Heavy Metals from the Soil

Type of grant: National (REC CO, Serbia and Montenegro)

Leading NGO: Sanitary Ecology Society of Belgrade (Serbia and Montenegro)

Project background

Rakovica is an urban community and industrial zone in the southern part of Belgrade. It covers 3,036 hectares and has 180,000 citizens. In the fabrication yard of the Livnica foundry in the central part of Rakovica, preliminary investigations showed contamination of soil by heavy and toxic metals. Over the course of many years anthropogenic activities connected to industry, energy production, mineral exploitation and distribution, and traffic have caused — and are still causing — the production and storage of dangerous and polluting substances.

Pollution can be found in the air, water or soil. Pollution from the air, such as gaseous or aerosol pollution eventually finds its way into the soil, and from there into underground and ground waters. Soil is being irreversibly degraded and lost as a result of increasing and often conflicting demands from nearly all economic sectors. The main problems are irreversible losses due to soil sealing and erosion, continuing contamination from local and diffuse sources, acidification, compaction and desertification.

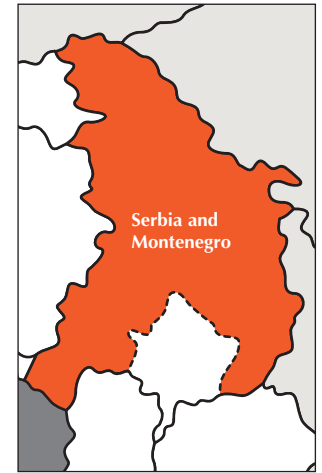
In terms of human and animal health, pollutants can be toxic, carcinogenic, teratogenic, mutagenic and bio-accumulative. Substances polluting the soil degrade at varying speeds, depending on the substratum which pollutants contaminate.

Project goals

The project's aim was to promote sustainable development in urban areas through examples of best practices, namely through phytoremediation and the promotion of public participation in addressing urban sustainability.

Project objectives

- Raising the public's awareness of sustainable development;
- Promotion of new technology, namely phytoremediation — an innovative clean-up technology for sustainable development;
- Promotion of the Aarhus Convention within the local community;
- Development of local employment initiatives, social integration and opportunities on the labour market;
- Provide examples of best practices;
- Promotion and implementation of the Aarhus Convention in the local community;
- Develop representatives from non-government and government sectors, as well as industry representatives;



Education was also central to the project, and included education on environmental protection and local employment initiatives

- Participate in and collaborate with experts and scientific institutions on environmental protection.

Amount awarded

The project was awarded a grant of EUR 9,300. In addition, the Rakovica municipality and the business and industrial sectors provided a further EUR 10,000.

Implementation

During the implementation of the project, sustainable development was fostered within the local community through the organisation of seminars, workshops, and a training course for students and industrial workers. This was undertaken in collaboration with the municipality's services and industrial sector, science institutes, the university, and project experts. Promotional materials were developed and distributed in cooperation with local media (i.e. TV and radio shows, newspaper articles) with the aim of improving the level of information available to citizens.

A partnership was established among relevant stakeholders, including local authority representatives, NGOs, and local experts. Work was also carried out on the terrain itself via cleaning and the application of phytoremediation in order to reduce soil degradation.

Target groups

The main focus group encompassed the general public, and specifically students and industrial workers from the project area. The municipality and local businesses were also involved.

Achievements

The project addressed the three fundamental components of sustainable development — environmental protection, economic growth and social equality — while promoting an interdisciplinary solution to a real problem. Science and technology were combined with society itself: research and development were undertaken on the implementation of socially and environmentally sound technologies. The risks posed by heavy metals in the soil and water resources of the Rakovica district were reduced.

Education was also central to the project, and included education on environmental protection and local employment initiatives. The project successfully involved the local community and garnered a great deal of interest from local residents.

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Conservation of Traditional Cheese Production in the Tuzla Area

Type of grant: National (REC CO Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Lead NGO: EKOPOT (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Project background

Why traditional cheese making? This question was asked at the outset of the project. Autochthonous cheese is a material treasure; part of the cultural heritage of the Tuzla area. Over the centuries the art of cheese making has been handed down from generation to generation, serving as a pillar of rural family sustainability. The project worked to maintain this tradition and broaden its use as an example of sustainable production. The project participants (i.e. target groups, stakeholders) furthered their knowledge of sustainable development and of cheese production as an environmentally and economically acceptable human activity.

The project also raised public awareness about the concept of sustainable development through providing examples of manufacturing techniques such as cheese production that do not endanger the environment. Bosnia and Herzegovina's national strategy of sustainable development has yet to be formulated, and this project can be seen as a contribution towards its creation and adoption.

Project goals

The project's goal was to put into practice the principles of sustainable development through the conservation of local traditions.

Project objectives

- Establishment and introduction of practice principles and the concept of sustainable development in the chosen region;
- Raising awareness in the local community about the necessity of sustainable development;
- Maintenance of traditional cheese production;
- Improvement of current traditional cheese making;
- Establishment of collaboration between key stakeholders;
- Improvement of social and economic position of the women in project area.

Amount awarded

The project was awarded a grant of EUR 8,260. EKOPOT contributed with additional resources (mostly in-kind contributions) of EUR 8,300.



During the implementation of the project it was noted that the majority of participants were women

Implementation

The project was mainly implemented through work with the public, media, decision makers and other stakeholders. Activities focused on promotion, education and training sessions as the most feasible means to reach the project's goals and objectives.

Target groups

The primary target group was cheese producers (primarily women) and the young population (i.e. the chemistry secondary school in Tuzla). Other involved stakeholders included: the municipality of Tuzla, the BiH farmers association (Tuzla office), Vesta Radio, and milk producers.

Achievements

The project helped to start the long process of preserving and developing traditional values and lifestyles. It assisted in developing the capacities of the stakeholders involved. As a follow-up activity, EKOPOT coordinated with the Tuzla tourist board to make a successful application for funding follow-up activities from other donors. The idea is to develop projects dealing with ecological food production and the promotion of agro-eco tourism.

The project achieved the following:

- Raised awareness about the need to introduce the sustainable development concept. This resulted in better involvement of local government, and in increased contribution from local authorities towards financing a local cheese festival. Ekopot membership has been growing as well.
- Maintenance of traditional cheese production. The number of cheese producers has increased after the project. During the last workshop the initiative to establish an association of cheese producers was raised. During the implementation of the project it was noted that the majority of participants were women.
- Promotion, education, training. This was achieved via the media (i.e. Radio Vesta, Radio Tuzla, local press); workshops and practical training; printed reference material (i.e. leaflet, booklet); and lobbying via the media, polls and direct contacts.

The next step for Ekopot is the Protection of the Geographic Origin of Cheese project, which will aim to start up activities for origin protection of chosen cheese types as one facet of the sustainable development and protection of rural areas.

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Promotion of Sustainable Tourism in Kozara National Park

Type of grant: National (REC CO Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Lead NGO: Young Researchers of Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Project background

Kozara Mountain is situated in north-western Bosnia and Herzegovina. Administratively, it is part of Republika Srpska. Formed in 1965, the Kozara National Park covers an area of 3,987 square kilometres. The biggest threats to the future of the park include:

- devastation of natural assets;
- decline/loss of the tourism market;
- lack of a strategy for the development of tourism;
- poor and inadequate promotion of Kozara's attractions;
- lack of coordination and cooperation among actors and institutions in the tourism sector; and
- lack of positive legislation and competence.

The motivation behind the activities of this project were to assist improved management of the Kozara National Park, to help the preparation of a strategy for the development of tourism in protected areas of the park, contribute to better coordination of activities of certain actors in the tourism sector, and address the lack of facilities for tourists. Improving the awareness of local inhabitants about the environment and sustainable development was also a goal of the project from the very beginning. The plans of the Initiative Board for the Reconstruction of Kozara were (according to the project team) not fully in harmony with principles of sustainable development, and efforts were therefore needed to generate development plans that better employ the principles of sustainability.

Project goals

The project aimed to promote the sustainable management of the protected area of the Kozara National Park through sustainable tourism.

Project objectives

The project set itself three objectives:

- to raise public awareness about tourism and the environment;
- to protect the natural and cultural tourist values of Kozara National Park; and
- to develop and enhance Kozara Mountain as a tourist attraction.

Amount awarded

The project was awarded a grant of EUR 9,850.

The aim of the Kozara Ethno festival is to protect and preserve the cultural identity of residents of the Kozara area

Implementation

The objectives of this project were to be achieved through information and public relations activities for the promotion of sustainable tourism, and the inclusion of all interested parties in issues concerning the development of tourism at the Kozara National Park. This was facilitated by the use of joint planning, acceptance of good practices from around the world, and pinpointing those tourist activities which are based on principles of sustainability.

At the end of October 2005, the Good Practices in the Management of Protected Areas seminar took place in Mrakovica. Future activities of the project were presented, along with international tendencies in tourism and sustainable tourism, and examples of management from the Abruzzo National Park and the protected area of Zasavica. The aim of the seminar was to inform interested parties about the project's future activities, good practices in the management of protected areas and international tendencies in tourism that support sustainable management. At the end of the seminar 15 representatives involved in tourism development at Kozara National Park had reached some conclusions and drawn up an action plan for the future.

The project team considers the existing legal framework in Republika Srpska regarding national parks and protected areas as insufficient, and a new initiative was therefore proposed — the Association of Protected Areas in BiH. The aim would be development of existing protected areas and declaring new ones. The management of the Kozara National Park accepted the idea of developing sustainable tourism and agreed that the principles of sustainable development should be applied to the protected area as good practice and also as an example for other areas that are not under legal protection.

The Kozara Ethno festival was organised as one of the project activities and it is planned to develop it into a regular (annual) event. In September 2005, preparations for Kozara Ethno 2006 started. The event will take place in the village of Piskavica on June 30 and July 1, 2006. A large number of local residents were involved in preparing for the festival. They have accepted the initiative with excitement and will be participating in the organisation of the event (e.g. in the preparation of traditional meals, decorations, and gathering ethnic objects for an exhibition).

The aim of the Kozara Ethno festival is to protect and preserve the cultural identity of residents of the Kozara area through the presentation of traditional activities, folk hand-crafts, regional cuisine and music. As the project worked to promote sustainable tourism in Kozara, some new ideas were generated based on the principles of sustainability. Promotional materials directed a search for specific tourist products from Kozara, and demonstrated how Kozara must be distinct in terms of what it can offer tourists, while at the same time respecting principles of environmental protection and social justice.

The workshop on the Creation of a Strategy for the Development of Tourism at Kozara attracted around 35 participants: representatives of local authorities and tourist organisations, representatives from the regional chamber of commerce, private companies, NGOs, construction companies, and agencies for development and the media. At this workshop the Board for the Preparation of a Strategy for Tourism Development in Kozara was established. The task of the board was to put together a project proposal, raise funds for its implementation and organise an initial meeting. The Initiative Board consists of five members, one each from the Republic of Srpska Tourist Organisation, the

Kozara National Park, the Regional Coordination of Tourist Organisations, the Ministry of Trade and Tourism (Republika Srpska), and the Initiative Board for the Reconstruction of Kozara (nine municipalities).

Target groups

Target groups of the project include:

- Kozara National Park (public company);
- Banja Luka Tourist Organisation (local government);
- local civic associations and groups (NGOs); and
- tourists and the general public.

Achievements

The major achievements of the project are:

- the acceptance by the local community of Kozara Ethno, meaning the festival will become a regular event;
- the research and publication of a tourist guide to Kozara;
- printed brochures and postcards (i.e. promotional material); and
- the establishment of the Board for the Preparation of the Development Strategy of Kozara.

Parties interested in the development of Kozara National Park were informed about good practices in the management of protected areas through the seminar and through joint work. Brochures and postcards were published containing information about the principles of sustainable development, and the natural and cultural assets of the Kozara area. These materials were distributed to all interested parties, and can also be found on the information desk of the Banja Luka Tourist Organisation at the Kozara National Park, and at tourism fairs throughout Republika Srpska, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad.

More than 1,000 people visited the Kozara Ethno festival. The event had good media coverage and therefore enjoyed a high profile throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. A documentary film was shot about Kozara and the Kozara Ethno festival. By October 2005, 200 copies of the film had been made and distributed to interested parties, potential tourists and guests. The movie will also be distributed through the Banja Luka Tourist Organisation in the future. The movie was screened during the Nature and Man fair in Novi Sad and on an advertising panel taken out by the Banja Luka Tourist Organisation.

The provision of information and publicity material for interested parties and potential tourists provided more adequate directions and information on how to plan and organise trips to Kozara National Park.

The publicity material developed for this project has not only initiated tourist visits to the region, it has also raised the environmental awareness of the local population as a lasting outcome of the project. In the presence of all interested parties a Board for the Preparation of a Strategy for Tourism Development at Kozara was formed. An initiative for the creation of a regional tourist organisation network also emerged.

**More than 1,000
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the Kozara
Ethno festival**

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Transition from Conventional to Organic Agriculture

Type of grant: National (REC CO Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Leading NGO: Economic Cooperation Network – ECON (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Project background

The development of organic agriculture started in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2000. ECON was the organisation behind the initiative and is still the key local organisation in the field. Much has been achieved so far: many local producers and processing companies have been certified by KRAV, the reputable Swedish certification organisation; products have been exported to the EU and the USA; a local certification body has been formed; and cooperation has been established with similar initiatives in Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia and Montenegro.



Project goals

The project aims to promote sustainable agriculture through the development of organic agriculture in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Project objectives

The project aimed to develop organic agriculture by helping farmers to become involved in organic agriculture in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in this way achieve apparently contradictory outcomes: increase employment while protecting the environment. The primary goal of the project was to help farmers to adequately understand and fulfil the requirements of the organic production certification process. The secondary goal was to promote organic farming among other stakeholders within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Amount awarded

The project was awarded a grant of EUR 10,000.

Implementation

Implementation can be divided into three types of activity:

- meetings of the project participants: implementation of each individual seminar agreed; goals outlined; tasks and activities of individual participants agreed; preparation for seminars;
- seminars: beneficiaries (i.e. farmers and guests) presented with information and ideas;
- activities connected with the implementation of individual seminars and the overall project: e.g. invitations, preparation of material for participants, choosing of beneficiaries, preparation of technical equipment for the seminars, booking of premises for the seminars);

The project encouraged an approach to agriculture that is environmentally acceptable

- goals were achieved through the implementation of four separate seminars during one agricultural season. In order to be considered as appropriately informed with the necessary know-how, each beneficiary was scheduled for inclusion in at least three out of four seminars; and
- each of the four seminars was held at two locations: Gorazde and Srebrenica. This allowed for double the number of beneficiaries and an equal national representation of beneficiaries in the project.

Target groups

- Farmers interested in organic agriculture;
- Local business societies;
- Municipalities.

Achievements

The project encouraged an approach to agriculture that is environmentally acceptable, and the results and outcomes will continue to be noticed in years to come.

Farmers were assisted in converting from conventional to organic agriculture, while at the same time being made aware of environmental protection through organic agriculture. Project beneficiaries now have a clear concept of organic agriculture, including the methods and activities that define organic agriculture. Beneficiaries learned the basic requirements of organic agriculture and became participants in the certification process. Farmers learned how conventional agriculture can be harmful to the environment.

The project increased the number of farmers now practising organic agriculture. (More than 40 farmers and several guests were present at the seminars at both locations.) These results were achieved through the efforts of the organiser and through the division of the seminars into two locations: Gorazde and Srebrenica. This ensured a balanced national representation. More than 50 beneficiaries were present at some of the seminars, and given the 30 who were present at two or more seminars the number of beneficiaries was higher than the one originally proposed by the project. A high level of interest was shown in both organic agriculture and the seminars, and the latter were considered very useful by the beneficiaries.

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Education, Public Participation and Promotion of Sustainable Development Principles in Neretva Canton in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Type of grant: National (REC CO Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Leading NGO: Bura Environmental Association, Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Project background

Sustainable development should integrate environmental protection with developments in the society and economy. In order to achieve the continued development of society it is necessary to pay more attention to protection of the environment. Intensive exploitation of natural resources in Bosnia and Herzegovina — where mainly outdated concepts and technologies persist — does not contribute to a balanced development. Through the realisation of this project, the environmental association Bura tried to encourage improved implementation of sustainable development principles in Neretva Canton in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Project goals

The overall goal of the project was to encourage initiatives based on principles of sustainable development through the education of target groups and the participation of the public in the implementation of the presented principles.

Project objectives

- Involve the public and educate target groups in sustainable development principles;
- Provide incentives to implement the initiatives of the target groups by application of the adopted sustainable development principles.

Amount awarded

The project was awarded a grant of EUR 9,854.

Implementation

In order to attract more interest and ensure the better realisation of the project goals, the media was contacted. During the course of preparing for project implementation, the Bura Environmental Association defined four main areas for sustainable development: waste management, water management, agriculture and renewable energy sources. Media presentations were directed towards increasing public participation and education in terms of an improvement in the sustainable utilisation of natural resources relevant to the above-mentioned areas. The realisation of each project segment was coordinated and led by renowned experts in the respective areas, who were knowledgeable about training as well as lecturing techniques and methods.

**Kick-starting
organic food
production
requires
increasing the
number of
certified
producers and
processors of
organic food**

Each public round-table discussion was preceded by a TV or radio programme on local stations. These programmes were thematic and were also used to announce forthcoming debates. After each of the four round-table sessions, newspapers reported on the event. In addition to these activities, the project used the Internet and <www.bljesak.info> (the most visited local information web-pages) to announce events and present a description of the project's activities. Experiences gained through the project's activities were presented through four *Guides to Sustainable Development in HNC*, which covered the following topics: waste management, water management, agriculture and renewable energy sources.

The above-mentioned project methodology was applied in order to attract and educate the public to take a more active part at the very beginning of project implementation. It included media coverage in the form of interviews with recognised experts and members of the Bura association. Media coverage (TV, radio, internet, print media) proceeded each round-table session and each of the specific topics was discussed with the interested parties. The experience gained resulted in the publication of a guide which is being distributed to all relevant institutions, individuals and interested parties in order to widen participation and education. Furthermore, this publication will result in concrete activities, some of which were proposed during the round-table sessions and can be found in the guide.

Target groups

The project's target groups were the general public, local and cantonal authorities, media (TV, radio, newspapers), universities, public enterprises and NGOs.

Achievements

The main indicators of success of the project are the specific initiatives that have arisen from project activities directed towards activating mechanisms for sustainable development in HNC. Solving ecological problems caused by the open dumpsite at the Vihovici coalmine, in the vicinity of Mostar, is just one of the initiatives that followed the first discussion topic — waste management. The separate collection and recycling of solid waste was recognised as one of the activities that might contribute to sustainable development in the areas of waste management. Waste burning facilities was one of the options proposed to solve the problem. However, there are differing views on the applicability and benefits of this solution. Before the installation of waste burning facilities, some experts in the field need to be consulted. An awareness crisis was singled out as the main hurdle that needs to be overcome on the path to sustainable development in HNC.

A water management study is essential in HNC, as this would demonstrate the impact of the "upper horizons" water project on the environment. Also, there are initiatives for the construction of additional dams on the Neretva River, which also need to be reconsidered in terms of the overall consequences of such projects.

There are great possibilities for organic agriculture in HNC. In order to kick-start organic food production it is necessary to increase the number of certified producers and processors of organic food. Therefore the *Project Guide for Agriculture* gives information on organic certification in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The round-table session on renewable energy sources concluded that wind power could be a major opportunity in terms of sustainable development in HNC. This project

has started to be realised at Sveta Gora in Podvelezje. However, it became apparent that in order to attract foreign investment for wind power resources — and metal and electric industry based on such technology — it is necessary to develop a wind-chart.

All results, ideas, initiatives and solutions for all four areas have been presented and explained in guides which will be distributed to all ministries, local authorities, academic institutions, NGOs, international organisations and all other interested parties and relevant institutions and individuals.

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Local Agenda 21 for the Municipality of Veles

Type of grant: National (REC CO former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

Leading NGO: Vila Zora (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

Project background

If “sustainable development is economic development that is socially responsible, ecologically acceptable, and is supported by the basis of civil society,” then the municipality of Veles (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) had in the past unsynchronised development that created huge negative consequences. In the 1970s, Veles received substantial investments that enabled good economic development. However, at that time people did not think at all about the consequences of forced economic development on the environment and people’s health. Today the pollution continues, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent because of bankruptcies at the factories. Still, the consequences of pollution will be present for a long time to come.

In attempting to resolve this problem and secure the development of the municipality, sustainable development needs to be accepted at the local level, which means creating a Local Agenda 21 as a strategic document for sustainable development.

Project goals

Creation of an action plan for the local community through an integral approach and a three-way public-private-civil partnership.

Project objectives

The project’s objectives were to:

- include representatives of the local government, economic subjects, and NGOs — and especially women’s and youth groups and other ethnic communities — in the creation of the community vision;
- increase public awareness and the broad acceptance and implementation of the strategies and policies of sustainable development;
- enforce the capacities of the included groups from the community through education for sustainable development, and for teamwork and organisation strengthening;
- forge a more effective partnership between local authorities and NGOs; and
- accomplish the sustainability and activity of the working bodies in monitoring and assessing the future implementation of priorities from the Local Agenda 21.

Amount awarded

The project was awarded a grant of EUR 8,640.

Implementation

The project was initiated with the identification and gathering of representatives from local authorities, local businesses, institutions, and NGOs in order to form a citizens' committee. The resulting citizens' committee for sustainable development is comprised of 22 representatives. Its work enabled citizen participation in decision making on local issues. Through this committee local expertise is used, on a voluntary basis, in order to help solve local problems. The next step was the formation of work groups. According to the categories and scope of priorities, five work groups were formed:

- local economic development;
- social, health and education;
- environment;
- urban planning; and
- local democratic development.

Community analyses and estimates were conducted next as a basis for long-term strategic planning. The citizens' committee made an estimate of the current situation of the elements of sustainable development in the community. The source of information used: professionals for appropriate issues, members of the citizens' committee, appropriate official documents and publications. The typical categories were analysed: demography, social welfare, infrastructure, environment, local authority, local economy, and the civil department.

The next step was the preparation of a community vision. This is an overview of the condition that the city of Veles would like to achieve through creating a new strategic plan. The envisioned title is "Welcome to Veles 2015."

The citizens' committee performed tasks to confirm the priorities. Priorities were grouped into subjects that mirrored the working groups. The tasks were processed according to the assessment of the community.

The wider priority list was offered to citizens as a questionnaire in order to examine public preferences. The citizens' committee reached a consensus decision to choose the priorities that formed the basis of the action plan. Within the development of an action plan for the community, the groups worked intensively and frequently on:

- defining clearly measured targets and tasks;
- identification and choice of recommended actions for solving the priorities, using an integral multi-sectored approach; and
- creating a plan for monitoring and evaluation.

The action plan contains elements that are highly profitable in terms of sustainable development, are technically feasible in terms of implementation, and enjoy strong support from the general public in the municipality

A campaign aimed at raising the public's awareness of sustainable development was also run, in order to:

- introduce the public to sustainable development and its implications for the community;

- inform the public about the various steps taken in strategy making;
- involve the public in the work of the bodies and the recommended activities;
- introduce the public to the strategy draft; and
- gain media coverage of the activities.

A public debate on the draft strategy was held with members of the Council of the Municipality of Veles, and some of their notes were incorporated into the project. On June 29, 2005 the Council of the Municipality of Veles adopted LA 21, making it an official document of the municipality.

Target groups

The project's target groups were:

- the business sector;
- NGOs;
- local institutions; and
- local government.

Achievements

The project achieved the following:

- partnership and cooperation between different sectors;
- 50 active participants;
- capacity building for sustainable development;
- Veles Municipality has taken responsibility for its own problems;
- positive change in the community of Veles;
- sustainability — the citizen's committee continues to function;
- improved cooperation between NGOs and local authorities;
- more than 10 tasks from the action plan already implemented; and
- the project will act as a guide for other municipalities in the countries.

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Developing Small Economy Through Farming in Kosovo

Type of grant: National (REC CO Kosovo/territory under interim UN administration)

Leading NGO: Krusha e Vogel Association of Women Farmers

Project background

The project aimed to help rural families preserve their farming traditions — and thereby protect villages from migration — and create a financial source for these families. The Krusha e Vogel Association of Women Farmers enjoyed the partial financial support and full moral support of the municipal authorities during the implementation of the entire project. The association helped women farmers to increase their sales, markets and profits through education and the building of a milk collection facility.

Project goals

The project aimed to help rural families preserve their farming traditions and thereby protect villages from migration. The project intended to help women farmers sell their products and increase their market. Project goals were as follows:

- to create a sustainable income for families in a rural part of Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration);
- to enable the population, especially women, to provide for their families; and
- to encourage agricultural practices that are environmentally sound.

Project objectives

In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals the project envisaged technical as well as educational activities. One objective of the project was to establish a milk collection point for six neighbouring villages, accompanied with the necessary educational and informative activities.

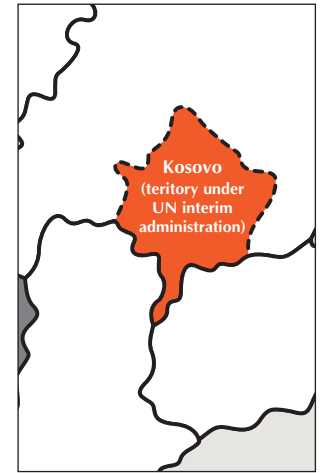
The collection point was constructed and equipped for the collection and storage of milk until the subsequent collection by a local factory. An agreement was achieved with the local factory in order to ensure the demanded quality and quantity of milk brought in by the farmers.

Amount awarded

The project was awarded a grant of EUR 9,650, through joint funding from the REC and CARE International.

Implementation

During the inception phase of the project, the implementing NGO identified local livestock farmers. The project was presented to them in more detail and contacts with the municipal authority were established. Once promises of support from the local authori-



**The project offers
a long-term
sustainable
financial income
for the families
involved**

ties had been received, the organisation of the planned seminars could start. With the intention of involving as many farmers as possible in the project, introductory meetings were held in the villages of Krajk, Bregdrini, Lukinaj and Romaj.

As this project was financed jointly by the REC and CARE International, the seminars were also organised in cooperation with experts from CARE. Separate seminars were held in all of the villages involved (i.e. Krajk, Lukinaj, Bregdrini, Romaje, Krusha e Vogel). Once the project coordination board was satisfied with the introduction and information disseminated in the above-mentioned seminars, a location for the milk collection facility was chosen. Construction companies able to carry out the preparatory construction work were contacted and selected. In the meantime, purchasing procedures could begin and all specified equipment was supplied and installed at the facility as soon as it was finished (i.e. September 2004). From October 2004 the implementation of the project started. Two women were trained and then employed at the collection facility to deal with receiving and treating the milk handed in. From the very start of the project agreements had been reached with local milk factories to immediately collect the milk brought in to the facility.

Target groups

The primary target group of this project was housewives in this rural part of Kosovo (territory under interim UN administration). When the project was implemented it was well known that the area around Krusha e Vogel did not offer many employment opportunities. Especially after the conflict many women found themselves the main provider of their family. Witnessing this difficult and challenging situation the Association of Women Farmers proposed a project whereby women would be able to earn a living while still carrying out their daily chores.

Achievements

The project's objectives were fully achieved and completed. The collection facility was constructed and milk collection commenced. The project offers a long-term sustainable financial income for the families involved, and it seems highly likely that the number of farmers involved in the project will grow in the near future.

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Implementation

The project started with the First NGO Meeting in Skopje, which introduced all of the project partners and presented the project's activities and goals, as well as the responsibilities of the various partners. Next, DEM started to prepare promotional material, namely the flyers and banner which were used for project activities. Educational activities started at the first meeting in Skopje, with experts from universities and academia presenting the basic information about GMOs.

After the first meeting, members of the NGOs started to make enquiries at their respective municipalities. The aim was to explore the level of knowledge of GMOs among consumers, farmers, agriculturalists, experts, and the relevant government ministries of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Activists from the NGOs were educated on how they should conduct their enquiries and how to inform consumers, farmers, and agriculturists about the problems associated with GMOs. The results were presented along with conclusions to all of the national media at a press conference in Skopje.

The networking of participating NGOs in the GMO campaign featured four NGOs from different parts of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia included in the project activities. Interestingly, many journalists attended although there was no formal invitation because it was an educational session for NGOs. Following this event, a big anti-GMO campaign began on all of the national television channels. Representatives from DEM were invited to talk on all of the national TV channels, radio stations and newspapers to present information about the GMO problem.

The project team prepared bumper stickers declaring "GMO-free Macedonia," and informative flyers, which were distributed with newspapers to 10,000 homes across the country. A GMO-free banquet was prepared as a public education event: GMO-free food from local markets was shown to citizens in Skopje, Bitola, Sv. Nikole, Pehchevo and Ohrid. Specially made postcards were signed by citizens to show their support for the laboratory control of GMOs in the country. An ANPED report was translated and sent with the latest information on GMOs from the Friends of the Earth Journal to the principals of all 85 municipalities in the country.

Subsequent activities were undertaken with the help of a legal expert, who wrote a comparison of the working version of the Macedonian GMO legislation with the EU legislation. At the Second NGO Meeting, the legal expert and all of the partners involved in the project made suggestions for changes in the next national GMO legislation.

The biggest project event, co-organised by DEM and the Ministry of Environment, collected all experts, authorised ministries, NGOs, and the media. Postcards signed by citizens — demanding the rapid authorisation of lab control of GMOs — were formally handed over to the Ministry of Environment.

The legal expert presented public demands for changes in the next legislation on GMOs. Experts, professors, and NGO members discussed the GMO problem. New GMO legislation that includes public input was demanded. After these extensive activities, DEM undertook a second investigation and concluded that public awareness among consumers and agriculturalists had increased 30 percent as a result of the project's activities.

The project represents a very large first step in actualising the GMO problem in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The activities have had many results and the lead NGO plans to continue to protect the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia from a GMO invasion.

Initiatives for Legislation and Raising Public Awareness of Genetically Modified Organisms in the Republic of Macedonia

Type of grant: National (REC CO former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

Leading NGO: DEM Ecologists Movement of Macedonia (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

Project background

Although the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a small country, the contribution of agriculture to the Macedonian economy is important. In terms of GDP, agriculture contributes at around 16 percent. It also has a similar importance for employment. There are environmental, health and economic reasons for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to protect itself against GMOs. With GMO-free products the country would be able to increase its exports of agricultural products within Europe. However, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia does not have legislation in place that covers the production, export and import of GMOs. There was a national moratorium on the GMO problem, and the Ecologists Movement of Macedonia (DEM) organised a public campaign to demand that the Ministry of Environment introduce strict legislation — similar to that seen in EU countries. As the result, the new GMO legislation is now under discussion.

The project generated a campaign against GMOs to convince and encourage the general public as well as other local and national NGOs to become involved in the issue. This put the Ministry of Environment under pressure to introduce strict legislation against GMOs.

Project goals

The project aimed to raise public awareness about GMOs among consumers and NGOs. The intention was to gain the support of the Ministry for Environment in preparing legislation about GMOs and to set up an authorised laboratory to carry out GMO tests.

Project objectives

The project's main objectives were:

- to generate support for GMO-related legislation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia;
- to increase the NGO sector's knowledge about GMOs, using the capacities of DEM members; and
- to raise public awareness about GMOs in the country.

Amount awarded

The project was awarded a grant of EUR 6,400.



Target groups

The project's main target groups were:

- NGO members of DEM;
- consumers from four of the biggest municipalities; and
- the Ministry of Environment.

Achievements

- Cooperation with the Biodiversity Department of the Ministry of Environment resulted in an acceleration of activities for creating legislation on GMOs, as well as the authorisation of laboratory control on the export and import of GMOs.
- The members of four NGOs from different parts of the country, who are also DEM members, were educated about the GMO problem. National activities were expanded to four different municipalities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- Public awareness about GMOs was raised, while consumers were shown how to recognise and protect themselves against GMOs.

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THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (REC)

is a non-partisan, non-advocacy, not-for-profit international organisation with a mission to assist in solving environmental problems in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The REC fulfils this mission by promoting cooperation among non-governmental organisations, governments, businesses and other environmental stakeholders, and by supporting the free exchange of information and public participation in environmental decision making.

The REC was established in 1990 by the United States, the European Commission and Hungary. Today, the REC is legally based on a charter signed by the governments of 28 countries and the European Commission, and on an international agreement with the government of Hungary. The REC has its head office in Szentendre, Hungary, and country offices and field offices in 16 beneficiary countries which are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey.

Recent donors are the European Commission and the governments of Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as other inter-governmental and private institutions.



Sustainability in Action:

NGO Initiatives for Sustainable Development in the Western Balkans