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Albania: ENV.Net sub-grantees in Albania

During March 2019, Co-PLAN launched the Call for Proposal (through the sub-grant scheme), for CSOs that deal with environmental issues and circular economy. The main aim of the financial support is to contribute to the development of knowledge and critical understanding circular economy model opportunities. As well as to promote and engage small CSOs active in campaigning and advocacy on environment to promote effective actions for the benefit of Albania citizens.

Mendime dhe Inisiativa të Lira (MIL) is implementing in Lushnja Municipality a project which is called "No to pesticides". The main goal is to better inform the farmers and citizens in the city of Lushnje regarding the production and consumption of agricultural products. Until now MIL has accomplished the sowing and safekeeping of two of the city's gardens. Citizens have decided to join MIL voluntarily and together with experts have created mini gardens near their homes, all around the city.

During the implementation of the project there were identified four different types of farmers, such as:

- farmers that declare the usage of only pharmaceutical medicine and not pesticides,
- farmers that do not accept to be interviewed but I believe that they know what they use for their farms,
- farmers that accept to tell you what happens but in secret,
- farmers that produce agricultural products only from their family.



Figure 1-Source: MIL project, 2019



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Belgium: Locking citizens out of environmental decision making is a threat to democracy – report highlights problems across the EU

Restrictions placed on civil society are dangerous for both our democracies and our environment. A new report by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) reveals examples of EU governments failing to deliver on laws that should ensure public participation in environmental decision-making. The 'Power for the people' report compiles some of these cases and highlights the issues existing in the EU. It also gives recommendations on how to better include the public and NGOs in environmental matters.

In recent years, changes to legislation and in political orientation have sometimes drastically limited the public participation of some NGOs in the EU.

Austria: "NGOs must have at least 100 members to be allowed to participate in public participation processes."

Hungary: "If an NGO receives more than €23,000 from outside the country, the NGO must be labeled 'foreign-funded' and all publications must be stamped as such. Failure to do so can result in the dissolution of the NGO. Because of serious breaches to the rule of law, Hungary risked losing its voting rights in the EU under article 7 of the Treaty."

Germany: "Recently, ATTAC Germany – an organisation involved in the alter-globalization movement – has lost its charitable status on the basis that its work did not fit with one of the 25 priorities of the government."

Poland: "In December 2018, during the UN climate talks in Katowice, at least 12 members of civil society groups with UN accreditation were denied entry into Poland as they were considered a 'threat to security'. This case is particularly disturbing in light of the importance of civil society participation in fighting climate change. Because of serious breaches to the rule of law, Poland, like Hungary, has been subject to article 7 measures (article 7 is a sanction against a member state which can result in voting rights suspended)."

United Kingdom: "A public consultation was carried out for the expansion of Heathrow airport. But the results of this consultation were published only after the Parliament already took its decision on the matter."



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Recommendations from the EEB:

- Wide representation of interests is a condition for a healthy democracy. National authorities and the EU need to ensure that NGOs are fully part of the political dialogue and are not only included as a formality;
- The Commission needs to guarantee that environmental considerations are always taken into account equally with economic ones;
- Member states need to ensure that their national laws are in line with the Charter of Fundamental Rights, to ensure freedom of assembly and freedom of expression;
- Member states and the EU institutions need to have clear and public guidelines on how policies are decided (budgets, strategies, political lines...)
- NGOs have effectively raised public awareness and started public debates thanks to their campaigns. NGO campaigns need to be acknowledged as a direct expression of democratic will.

Most EU governments failed to file air pollution plans by April deadline

EU officials are still waiting to receive crucial air pollution reduction programmes from fourteen EU governments, including France, Germany, Poland and Spain. National governments were supposed to detail how they planned to reduce emissions of harmful air pollution in 'National Air Pollution Control Programmes', which should have been sent to the European Commission this month. However, only 13 of the EU's 28 Member States had filed their plans by the end of April.

The full list of governments that have failed to set out their plans: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain. France and Germany were part of a 'toxic bloc' of EU member states sent to the European Court of Justice last year for their failure to cut emissions quickly enough to come into line with the EU air quality standards. The court already ruled against Bulgaria and Poland in earlier cases.

The missing air pollution programmes are a requirement of the National Emission Ceilings (NEC) Directive, which sets reduction targets for harmful pollution for each country. They should have detailed the measures that governments will use to cut emissions from areas like transport, industry and agriculture.



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The national air pollution reduction programmes, and other requirements in the NEC Directive, complement the role of the EU's air quality standards, which set maximum concentration levels for certain pollutants in the air we breathe.

According to the law, governments had to deliver until 1st of April their detailed air pollution reduction programmes to the European Commission. Governments were required to consult with the public about the contents of their plans. Only four governments met the original deadline



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Bosnia-Herzegovina: Support to a regional network for women's rights and gender equality and support to small scale projects promoting cooperation between communities and citizens from Serbia and Kosovo

Federation of BiH took the loan for the construction Unit 7 of Tuzla Thermal Power Plant. The Secretariat of the Energy Community has announced that it officially opens the procedure against BiH for resolving the dispute over the planned guarantee of the Federation of BiH for a loan of 614 million euros from the Chinese Eximbank. By opening this procedure, the Secretariat provides opportunity for Bosnia and Herzegovina to respond within two months on non-compliance with the Energy Community Law. It is important to note that this process can endanger the process of Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to the European Union and to the temporary suspension of funding by EU banks.

For details click here: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?ADSSChck=1554884354946&do=publi.detPUB&searchtype=AS&zgeo=11962938&aoet=36538&ccnt=7573876&debpub=&orderby=upd&orderbyad=Desc&nbPubliList=15&page=1&aoref=162473>

Opportunity for ENV.net partners, for submitting new round of the ENV.net project



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Italy: Support to regional thematic networks of civil society organisations, support to a regional network for women's rights and gender equality and support to small scale projects promoting cooperation between communities and citizens from Serbia and Kosovo

The global objective of the call is: In an overall vision of enhanced regional cooperation, good neighbourly relations and reconciliation, to strengthen participatory democracies and the EU approximation process in the Western Balkans and Turkey. Different lots are available, among them it is worth to mention lot 4 - Media freedom and pluralism; lot 5 - Enhancing CSOs' engagement in public administration reform; 7 - Innovative solutions to promote youth employment and environmental sustainability; 11 - Small scale projects promoting cooperation between communities and citizens from Serbia and Kosovo.

For details click here: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?ADSSChck=1556810447583&do=publi.detPUB&searchtype=AS&Pgm=7573840&zgeo=11962938&aoet=36538%2C36539&ccnt=7573876&ebpub=&orderby=upd&orderbyad=Desc&nbPubliList=15&page=1&aoref=162473>

Budget: 18.700.000 (EUR), **Deadline** for the submission of the concept note: 23th May 2019

Spotlight on a particular grass-root initiative different for every issue

A virtuous example of a grassroots initiative! The Center for environmental research and information Eko-vest from Skopje has given for the first time to North Macedonia one of the world's foremost award for grassroots environmental activists, the one assigned by the Goldman Environmental Foundation.

Ana Colovic Lesoska, who is the executive director of the above mentioned center, has successfully campaigned to halt international lending for two hydropower plants, thereby protecting the habitat of the Balkan lynx.

For details click here: <https://balkangreenenergynews.com/macedonian-activist-wins-goldman-environmental-prize/>



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Kosovo: Stone quarries in Kosovo

The Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Rural Development, Environment and Spatial Planning, in its meeting held on 2.4.2019 among other things, discussed the problem of stone quarries in Kosovo. The meeting was also attended by the Minister of Environment and the Chief Inspector of the Independent Commission for Mines and Minerals.

In connection with the quarry, the Minister of Environment stressed that the Ministry is constantly confronted with illegal operatives who abuse the assets of Kosovo for economic interests, and because of the inefficiency of the courts in imposing fines, the crimes remain unpunished. The ministry currently monitors three environmental aspects: air pollution, soil degradation and water pollution. However, with the approval of the Administrative Instruction for Mandatory Penalties, it enables inspectors to punish abusers of underground assets.

According to the Ministry the problem remains the illegal mining of coal in Obiliq. He said there were 90 inspections in the last 2 weeks. Currently we are in this action and we have in mind 3 municipalities: Gjakova, Rahovec and Malisheva, and then other municipalities. There are quarries that have carried out the exploitation activity and have carried out reclamation at the best level. We have quarries that have not carried out the reclamation and therefore bank guarantees are stopped. For announcement, he said that in the project is also attached the re-cultivation project and the bank guarantee to ensure that this process will be carried out.



Figure 2-The illegal mining of coal in Obiliq;Source: ATRC, 2019



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Montenegro: Memorandum on the protection of the Zeta River is signed

The agreement was signed on 9th of December, between the Capital City of Podgorica, the Municipality of Danilovgrad and representatives of NGOs Center for Protection and Research of Birds, Montenegrin Ecologists Society, Association of Young Ecologists Nikšić, Green Home, Environmental Movement Ozon, Dinaric Parks, Environmental Program.

Zeta is a river of state importance, and in the previous period it was subjected to various pressures and pollution. This initiative seeks to protect the lower course of this river.

The construction of the Komarača sHPP has been stopped

The Administrative Court of Montenegro annulled the decision of the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism to issue a building permit for the construction of sHPP Meteh on the Komarača River in Plav. The violation of the Law on General Administrative Procedure resulted in the application of the decision.

The fact that the land expropriation procedure has not been completed has not been taken into the account. Two sHPP were built on the Komarača River earlier. In the previous period, Green Home, along with local people that are living nearby the Komarača River, arranged protests and visits for the media, through the ENV.net project. In addition, signatures for petitions against the construction of sHPPs were also collected in cooperation with locals.

ENV-NET initiatives “Signature collecting for the petition has been completed”

We have completed the collection of signatures for the petition, by whom we request from the parliamentary moratorium on the construction of small HPPs in Montenegro. In the previous period, signatures were collected in several cities in Montenegro. In the period that comes, signatures and requests will be handed over to the parliament. The parliament will after verifying signatures, consider requests.



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The Republic of North Macedonia: The new Law on Waste Management – Season 2

The need for a new Law on waste management was recognised and announced in 2017. The notification of the start of the process for preparation of the new Law on Waste Management was published on the national electronic registry of regulations, with a defined timeframe for finalisation by September, 2018. During 2018, on several occasions the officials from the Ministry were reporting the process being in progress. However, it turned out that this was only the first season of the serial “A new Law on Waste Management”.

The new Law on Waste Management – Season 2: Recently, the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning placed a new notification on the national electronic registry of regulations, announcing the preparation of the new Law on Waste Management. The timeline for the preparation is now set to be by June 30th, 2019.

The description of the problem and the need for the new law are similar to those declared previously, precisely on 1st December, 2017.

As noted, with the adoption of a new waste management law, it will be possible to establish a functional regional waste management system and build regional landfills, while at the same time closing all non-standard landfills and waste dumps. At the same time, regional collection, transport, selection, waste recycling, as well as treatment and utilization will be enabled, which will increase the level of protection of human health and environmental protection, and all this will be a step towards enabling circular economy for this sector.

The law is expected to ensure for providing better environmental control of the activities in the area of waste management by reducing the disposal, ie reduced quantities of waste disposed, and for increasing the processing and recycling of waste, increasing the employment in the waste industry and ensuring related revenue growth; also, the development of a circular economy that will allow greater use of resources and approximation of national legislation with the one of EU.

However, it is yet to be seen to what extent the timeframe will be respected this time. Therefore ENV.net team from Macedonia will closely monitor the progress of the whole process.



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Link: https://ener.gov.mk/default.aspx?item=pub_regulation&subitem=view_ann_detail&itemid=br6A+2bHAzsUTHt06vraKw===

The Ministry of Environment will establish an advisory body for dealing with air pollution

On April 12, the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning announced the establishment of an advisory body for dealing with air pollution. Macedonian scientists working on research and collection of a series of data on air pollution will be part of the new advisory body. Science is currently making progress on this topic, but up to now the institutions have not used their data and knowledge.

The Ministry also announced launching an information platform that will unite all data, measurements, studies and surveys, together with recommendations and solutions to improve the state of ambient air quality throughout the country.

The position of environmentalists, CSOs and the public in general is that it is high time for concrete steps, not for new advisory bodies.

Given that the latest studies point out vehicles as major air pollutants, a new Law on Vehicles is announced. A working group is already working on this law, which will provide for the regulation of fees that will be paid on the basis of exhaust gases.

However, there are no novelties about the progress of preparation of the Law Amending the Law on Ambient Air Quality, announced in February 2018, with a deadline for drafting by April 2018. ENV.net team from Macedonia will continue to monitor the progress of the whole process.



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Leading by example Rosoman, 7th April, 2019

The waste is all around! Learning by doing (cleaning) will help us all, bit by bit, to instil the habit of not littering all and everything around us, and hopefully to become preservers rather than polluters and leaders by good examples. With aim to promote this maxim, on 7th April, ENV.net team from Macedonia, in cooperation with Eko Zivot from Kavadarci, realised a joint "cleaning" event with the students from the municipality of Rosoman.



Figure 3-Cleaning initiative in the Municipality of Rosoman, 7th April 2019; Source: Marija Mitova, 2019

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=568656620311342&set=pcb.2324334850956530&tvpe=3&theater>



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Meeting with the awarded CSOs

We are fully dedicated to carry out regular consultations and coaching to the winning applicants during their grant implementation period. With aim to support the development of their technical and networking skills, on 18th April 2019, following the official starting date of implementation (15th April, 2019) of the two awarded projects from the sub-granting call, the ENV.net team from Macedonia organised the second meeting with the representatives of Eko Zivot from Kavadarci and Mladinska Alijansa from Tetovo. The focus of the meeting was to provide technical support regarding the project registration before the relevant institution (Secretariat of European Affairs and the State Revenue Office) and coaching on further administration of their projects in line with the EU granting requirements.

ENV.net team from Macedonia will continue with this practice throughout the whole implementation period of their projects.



Figure 4-Meeting with the grantees, 18th April 2019; Source: 4x4x4 Balkan Bridges, 2019



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Serbia: Chapter 27 - Environment, from policy to implementation

Conference "Chapter 27 - Environment, from policy to implementation" was held in April, and organized jointly by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities with the support of the Ministry of state administration and local government. The Minister of Environmental Protection said at the Conference that the professional and careful work was done during drafting document negotiating position for Chapter 27, it has 200 pages, and it is supported by more than 1,000 pages of documents in addition to the negotiating position.

Ten Specific Plans of Implementation were prepared in the sectors of water management, waste management and industrial pollution. An additional eight Specific Plans are under development, for sectors of air quality and chemicals. Also the investment plan to the year 2044 is almost finalized. Ambassador of Sweden in Serbia, which is providing technical and financial assistance to the local governments in the implementation of various projects, noted that the implementation of laws and solutions in the field of environmental protection will not be easy, taking into account it is a long-term process that will have, at the end, a successful outcome.

The Minister of Environmental Protection announced that the negotiating position will be adopted by Serbian Government by the end of the year. ENV.net team reminds that the European Commission after the screening that were in 2014, asked Serbia by "screening report for Chapter 27" (June 2016, delivered January 2017) to prepare Negotiation position for Chapter 27, and from that period it was worked intensively. In 2018, two draft positions were sent unofficially to EC, while EC suggested in 2019 to Serbia to finalize Negotiating Position for Chapter 27.



Figure 5- Conference "Chapter 27- Environment, from policy to implementation"; Source: EASD, 2019



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Turkey: Recent Concerns on Eskişehir-Alpu Coal Power Plant in Turkey

The EIA process of the coal-based thermal power plant (lignite, domestic coal), planned to be constructed in Alpu District, Eskişehir Province, started in September 2017. Despite the resistance of local groups, NGOs, and local government officials, EIA approval was given by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization on 6 March 2018. Following this, together with TEMA Foundation, local people, communities, municipalities, chambers of engineers, and NGOs brought the decision to the court. On 3 April 2019, TEMA Foundation representatives attended the trial under the Eskişehir First Administrative Appeal Court regarding the lawsuit filed by TEMA for the cancellation of the EIA approval decision of the plant and coal mining project.

The privatization of the plant was planned to be completed at the beginning of 2018. However, it has been postponed for the sixth time since January 2018 and the next tender is scheduled for 27 June 2019. It currently belongs to Electric Generation Inc. (EÜAŞ).

The local movement against the plant is growing in Eskişehir province as of April. The lawsuits regarding the cancellation of the decision for exclusion of the site from agricultural land and the revision of the Eskişehir Regional Plan for the project were earlier filed by TEMA Foundation, local and NGOs, municipalities and chambers.

Apart from these, the movement against coal power plants in other provinces in Turkey were also active in April. The EIA expert meeting regarding the Çırpılar Thermal Coal Power Plant in Çanakkale province was held on 15 April 2019. Together with TEMA Foundation, Kazdağı Natural and Cultural Heritage Protection Association, and IDA Solidarity Association were present at the meeting as observers.



Figure 6-Alpu, Eskişehir Province "We Want You toBack Dow"; Source: TEMA, 2019



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Spotlight: A Joint Declaration regarding the impacts of the Hunutlu Coal Plant on biodiversity and public health in Adana Province

Prior to the Belt and Road Forum took place on 25-27 April 2019, the representatives of civil society groups, including TEMA Foundation, WWF Turkey, East Mediterranean Environmental Protection Platform (DAÇE), CAN-Europe and Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) brought their attention to serious environmental and health concerns particularly on coastal and marine ecosystem, and public health in Yumurtalık District, Sugözü Village of Adana, where the Hunutlu project was planned to be constructed.

In the press release, they referred to national legislation, 2009/10, through which the project poses severe risks to these protected species via its coastal structures such as the port for the coal shipment and cooling water intake and discharge systems. In addition, the project area is located within the borders of Sugözü-Akkum National Area, which is an important nesting site of loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*) and green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) that are under protection by three international agreements (Bern Convention, UN Convention of Biological Diversity and Barcelona Convention).



Figure 7-China builds a coal power plant in the protected coastal area", Map (left): Project Area in Hunutlu, Adana; Source: TEMA, 2019

The lawsuits of TEMA Foundation with regards to cancellation of the master plan revisions of the power plant are continuing. The rationale for the lawsuit is primarily on the basis of the potential damage of the pier and dewatering structures of the power plant to the protected site and sea turtles under protection as well as being contradictory to the objectives of the national Iskenderun Bay Integrated Coastal Zone Plan.



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In May 2017, China's Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Environmental Protection also adopted the "Guidance on Promoting Green Belt and Road", which highlights the need to observe laws and regulations for risk prevention, by urging Chinese businesses to observe international best practices, laws, regulations, and standards of the host countries. Most importantly, the Guidance attaches "great importance to the appeals of the local residents on environment protection to circumvent eco risk and ensure safety".



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