



# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

## ALBANIA: BEING PART OF #WORLDHERITAGE



Figure 1- Source: World Heritage Convention

Protected landscapes are an important asset for a country's socio-economic status, but also for the ability of these ecosystems to maintain a balance between nature-biodiversity-resources versus artificial interference. A key aspect of protecting these assets is how the processes of governance and management of protected landscapes affect their well-being and sustainability. This type of landscape besides the biological processes it carries, has a major importance as well as the added cultural and economic value for the region.

The natural and cultural heritage of the Lake Ohrid region is one of the important cultural and natural assets Albania shares with the Republic of North Macedonia. The value and importance of this lake was acknowledged and granted protection, as the UNESCO declared it a World Natural Cultural Heritage on July 5, 2019, in Baku, Azerbaijan, at the 44th UNESCO Session.



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

Here is important to emphasize that North Macedonian part of the Lake has been part of World Natural Cultural Heritage since 1979. After 40 years now, **Albanian part of the Lake is IN!**

This current situation poses also a challenge for the government authorities, including, national, regional, and local institutions, but also for the community. Now that the Albanian part of Lake Ohrid is protected, it requires efforts to maintain and develop it. This is because Lake Ohrid is experiencing major natural environmental changes as a result of the ever-increasing anthropogenic impact of recent years becoming a source of concern. There is some evidence of a "frightening biodiversity crisis" due to the impact caused by human activity accumulated over the past decades. (Merolli, 2019)

Some of the most pressing environmental problems that our part of Lake Ohrid has are:

- Discharge of urban and industrial wastewater directly into the lake (organic and chemical pollution)
- Development of intensive farming practices along the lakeshore (pesticides)
- Development of fish growth economies along the surface streams of resources flowing into the lake (antibiotic)
- Uncontrolled fishing
- Non-management of the streams and rivers flowing into Ohrid
- Deforestation and erosion
- Presence of at least 4 mining sites
- "Red Stone" dumps from where heavy metals are constantly discharged directly into the lake



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

Currently at a critical juncture in quality and management is the source of Drilon which is in the most degraded state ever recorded. The turbulence and pollutants present in surface waters have significantly reduced biodiversity in this habitat, but at the same time it is also affecting its landscape values.

Preserving Lake Ohrid and its watershed will make the future situation of this landscape more sustainable and at the same time increase the economic potential of the region and improve the quality of life for residents in the region.

The report on potential threats to protected areas proposed as protected areas in the Lake Ohrid region also states: "The precise and beneficial tendency towards pollution issues is a must in order to meet the natural (iii), cultural criteria of today. (vii) (iii) and the recommendation of the World Heritage Committee (33rd session of this Committee held in 2009), as this precedes not only any problems in the region but also discussions with UNESCO monitoring teams on the situation of the ecosystem in general and its specific aspects" (Merolli, 2019).

In the meantime, Lake Ohrid runs the risk of not being listed as part of UNESCO on the endangered list yet. Although two months have passed, we still have no response from the local and local authorities to prepare the plan of measures to be submitted to Paris at the end of January 2020. As the only document which if approved saves the status of this property.



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

## ITALY: WORLD CLEANUP DAY- 21<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2019

On that day volunteers and partners worldwide again will come together to rid our planet of trash – cleaning up litter and mismanaged waste from our beaches, rivers, forests, and streets.

World Cleanup Day harnesses the power of everyday people to achieve incredible things by joining together. Its beauty lies in cooperation and collaboration: building bridges between disparate communities, and including all levels of society – from citizens to business, to government. To know more, click here.

4. Funding opportunities for grass-root CSOs, media and individuals (activists)

Grant Scheme for Civil Society Support Programme III

The global objective of this call for proposals is to support the development of civil society through more active democratic participation in policy and decision-making processes.

The specific objective of this call for proposals is to empower CSOs in terms of their structures and participation capacities to decision-making processes and networking skills.

### ***The priorities of this call for proposals are:***

- To improve organisational and institutional capacities of CSOs and encourage partnership among CSOs;
- To promote active citizenship and/or participation of CSOs to decision-making processes at local, national or international levels.



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019



Figure 2- Source: <https://balkanriverdefence.org>

## SPOTLIGHT ON A PARTICULAR GRASS-ROOT INITIATIVE DIFFERENT FOR EVERY ISSUE

### ***Grass-roots movements' create multiplier effects!***

It is pretty known that in the Balkan region there are the last free-flowing rivers that are threatened by the construction of hydropower plants. It is probably less known that the civil society has been strongly mobilised to protect them and to actively advocate and lobby to stop the construction of additional dams and power plants. Specifically, Balkan River Defence, a four-year old grassroots movement led the process by exploring also the grounds for new collaborations with other grassroots organisations to expand the network active in that field. One of them is with the (a group of river scientists working for rivers' conservation) focused on the organization of the Students for Rivers Camp held in July

2019 to provide an opportunity for students around Europe to contribute in a joint way to the protection of Balkan rivers. For 28 students from 17 countries, with totally different backgrounds, was an intensive week, gathered in Soča valley, Slovenia to express their ideas, to learn about river conservation, to visit the Balkan regions and to experience the activism.



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019



Figure 3: Power Plant in Obliq  
Source: ATRC, KOSOVO

## **Kosovo: Kosovo assembly environmental commission reviews projtk law on pollution protection**

At its session in August 2019, the Environment Committee of the Assembly of Kosovo reviewed the Draft Law on Air Protection from Pollution, which was approved in 2007 and amended in 2010. According to the Ministry of Environment, this law should be amended and amended in some articles, which have had difficulties in implementation. The new version of the law will provide for tougher measures for polluters, greater and more concrete tasks for municipalities, greater duties and obligations with inspectors, the creation of monitoring mechanisms for the emission of gases, etc.

According to lawmakers, Kosovo is constantly facing enormous levels of air pollution, from power plants, cars, construction and industry. Unfortunately, the measures being taken are symbolic and as a result the number of diseases is increasing. Due to the dissolution of the Assembly of Kosovo, this draft law will be returned once more to the proposer, since according to the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly of Kosovo, with the dissolution of the Assembly, any draft law will be returned to the proposer.



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## **KOSOVO COORDINATES GLOBAL CLEANING CAMPAIGN: LET'S DO IT WORLD**

September 21 is the start of a global cleanup campaign marking greater civic mobilization around the world in the fight against pollution caused by waste - the World Cleanup Day. "Let's Do It World has chosen" Let's Do It Kosovo "as responsible for organizing and coordinating the 157 different countries of the world on World Clean Up Day. In addition to this year, Kosovo will coordinate World Clean Up Day in 2020. For this purpose, an awareness video has been produced, which will be broadcast in more than 150 countries around the world calling for environmental protection and greater engagement in environmental issues. The rivers, lakes, mountains, fields of every natural asset of our country are fascinating, if not polluted.

## **OVER 12 TONS OF FISH DIE IN DRIN RIVER IN PRIZREN MUNICIPALITY DUE TO WATER CONTAMINATION.**

Over 12 tons of fish die in Drin River in Prizren municipality due to water contamination. According to the fishermen, the starvation of the fish occurred due to the contamination of the rivers in this area by the dumping of waste from various companies operating in the municipality of Prizren, reports KTV.

The Director of Public Services of the Municipality of Prizren said that besides cleaning the rivers, they have no other competencies in this matter. Citizens blame private companies for dumping waste into the river.



Figure 4: Fish in Drin River

Source: ATRC, KOSOVO



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE: CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN KOSOVO

On September 25, the beneficiary organization of ENV.NET; Kosova Live has planned a national conference in Pristina on the topic, Circular Economy. Representatives of the Assembly of Kosovo, the Government of Kosovo, Municipalities, private recycling companies, non-governmental organizations, media, experts and Env.Net partner organizations from the region will be invited to participate.



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

## MONTENEGRO: TENDERING, WIND FARM ON BRAJICI LOCALITY

Ministry of economy has launching tendering for long-term lease to state land for the construction of a wind farm, on the Brajici locality, municipalities Bar and Budva.

Wind farm will have a minimum installed capacity of 70 MW. This will be a fourth wind farm in Montenegro.

Two wind farms Krnovo and Mozura are in the operational phase, and the construction of the Gvozd wind farm is expecting to start in 2020.

## Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development launching Call for public debate on the proposal for the adoption of River Basin Management Plans (Adriatic and Danube)

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in cooperation with European Commission implementing the project: „Strengthening Capacities for Implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive in Montenegro“, the project was financed through the IPA 2014.

River Basin Management Plans are provided, in accordance with the guidelines



Figure 5: TENDERING: Montenegro leasing land for wind farm on Brajići locality

Source: <https://balkangreenenergynews.com>



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

of the Water Framework Directive and the others relevant EU Directives. In accordance with the Water Framework Directive and Law on Water, Public debate for River Basin Management Plans will last 6 months, before their final adoption. During the 6 months period two conference will be held, one in the Adriatic and one in the Danube basin in Montenegro, where the Management Plan for the Adriatic and Danube Basins will be presented.

## **MONTENEGRO PAYS EUR 2.2 MILLION IN RENEWABLE ENERGY SUBSIDIES IN HYDROPOWER PLANTS**

From January 1, to the end of July operators of small hydropower plants (SHPPs) in Montenegro received a total of EUR 2.2 million in renewables incentives. Currently in the phase of operation is 14 SHPPs.

Producers of electricity from renewable energy sources in Montenegro received a total of EUR 8.08 million in state incentives in the period from January - July 2019, an increase of 3% compared with the same period last year

## **SAVE THE DATE: 18th of September – World Water Monitoring Day**



Figure 6- Source: <https://www.dreamstime.com>



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## SERBIA: ONE MORE STEP TOWARDS FINAL SERBIAN NEGOTIATION POSITION FOR CHAPTER 27 (REQUESTED RELEVANT GOVERNMENTAL MINISTRIES AND INSTITUTIONS OPINION ON PREPARED TEXT)

As the outreach of Meeting of Negotiation Group 27 with all Sectoral Working Groups, held on July 4th 2019 in National Parliament premises, prepared mature text of Negotiation Position for Chapter 27 (with supporting documentation) is ready to be send by Ministry of Environmental Protection to relevant governmental ministries and institutions for opinion (with intention to be approved by Government in coming several months).

## SCIENCE MEETS PARLIAMENTS 2019 FOCUSED ON CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUE!

In Belgrade, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, and under the patronage of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission, The Center for the Promotion of Science, organized an event under the title Science Meets Parliaments in the House of the National Assembly of Serbia, dedicated to the climate changes and their complex effects. Climate change is a particularly threatening issue for the Western Balkans. In addition to the opening address, the main program consists of three panel discussions with the topics: "Renewable sources of energy", "Climate changes affect



Figure 7: Science Meets Parliaments  
Source: EASD, Serbia



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

water”, and “Air quality and greenhouse gases”. As one of the Panelist, EASD Hon. President Andjelka Mihajlov noted ENV.net related Round table on air quality (held on June 4, 2019 in Belgrade, and co-organized by EASD – ENV.net Serbia).

Event succeeded in raising awareness about the science-policy nexus. So far, event Science Meets Parliaments has been held only in the member states of the European Union, this being the first time its organization is entrusted to a country outside of the EU.



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

## **TURKEY: IPCC SPECIAL REPORT ON LAND AND CLIMATE WAS LAUNCHED ON 8TH AUGUST IN GENEVA.**

IPCC launched a special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems on 8th August in Geneva. The report will be a key scientific input into forthcoming climate and environment negotiations, such as the Conference of the Parties of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP14) in New Delhi, India in September and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference (COP25) in Santiago, Chile, in December.

As stated on IPCC website; This report shows that better land management can contribute to tackling climate change, but is not the only solution. Land must remain productive to maintain food security as the population increases and the negative impacts of climate change on vegetation increase. This means there are limits to the contribution of land to addressing climate change, for instance through the cultivation of energy crops and afforestation. It also takes time for trees and soils to store carbon effectively. Bioenergy needs to be carefully managed to avoid risks to food security, biodiversity and land degradation. Desirable outcomes will depend on locally appropriate policies and governance systems.

### **Gold mining projects in Turkey increasing**

Mount Ida which is mythological area known world wide, is rich in biological diversity, with the great variety of species of plants and animals having international conservation status. 32 of the 84 plant species endemic to Turkey lives in Mount Ida. With its nature, history, nomadic cultural, and agricultural production and tourism potential, Mount Ida is one of the unique places in Turkey.



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

There are almost 30 different gold mining projects around Mount Ida. The latest project, the “Kirazlı Gold Mining Project with Cyanide” is carried out by “Doğu Biga Mining” which is a subsidiary of Canada-based Alamos Gold Inc. Company has other investment plans in the region other than “Kirazlı Project”; Mount Ağı Gold Mining Project (25 km to Kirazlı project) and Çamyurt Gold Mining project (4 km to Mount Ağı Project).

TEMA experts found out that the gold mine company cut approximately 195.000 trees in the project site. However, the company stated that the number of trees to be cut is 45.650 according to the Environmental Impact Assessment report. TEMA started a nation-wide campaign asking the Ministry of Environment to stop the operation of the mine which is breaching the commitments of the EIA. The campaign reached 550.000 signature.

## **425 representatives of TEMA Foundation gathered in İstanbul in August**

The 3-day event where 425 representatives were briefed about the 2019-2020 activities of the foundation as well as up-to-date environmental issues of the country such as coal, air pollution, climate and gold mining was held in İstanbul. Various workshops on rivers basins and zero waste are conducted to increase the capacity of the representatives.



Figure 8- Source: TEMA Foundation



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

As a leading Turkish NGO focusing on land and soil since 1992, TEMA Foundation states that desertification is often misunderstood. Desertification does not mean the transformation of the land to deserts. It means the loss of fertility and the decrease in the vital services of the soil by destroying vegetation instead. The loss of fertility of the land leads to an increase in rural poverty and the migration of people whose income depends on the land.

The causes of land degradation as well as erosion include agricultural land destroyed by non-agricultural usages (industry, urbanisation, tourism, mining, and transportation investments), wrong tillage and irrigation, stubble burning, unsustainable agricultural practices and mining projects affecting the environment.

## **Funding opportunities for grass-root CSOs, media and individuals (activists)**

### **Grant Scheme for Civil Society Support Programme – III (CSSP – III)**

The grant scheme aims to address the capacity development needs of CSOs. The institutional framework of this Grant Scheme includes the Directorate for EU Affairs of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Finance and Contracts Unit of the Republic of Turkey. The specific objective of the call for proposals is to empower CSOs in terms of their structures and participation capacities to decision-making processes and networking skills.

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is EUR 3.000.000. The grant must fall between the following minimum of 60.000 euro and maximum amounts of 100.000 euro. Applications must be submitted to the Central Finance and Contracts Unit (Ankara, Turkey) until 17 September 2019.



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

## BELGIUM: EUROPE'S FORESTRY POLICY IS NOT YET OUT OF THE WOODS

Despite being one of the few places on Earth where forest cover is enlarging, the European Union continues to export deforestation abroad and often uses the wrong forestry practices at home. With a fresh European Parliament, now is the time to tackle this with the right investments. On Thursday 8 August, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a major new report on the climate crisis and land use which, among other things, paints an alarming picture of the extent of deforestation and land degradation.

*"We need to see an urgent transformation in how we use land in the future,"* said WWF's Stephen Cornelius, the IPCC lead. "This includes the type of farming we do, our food system and diets, and the conservation of areas such as forests and other natural ecosystems."

Charting and gauging the implications of alternative land use options is vital if we are to make the best informed choices. This is precisely what the new EU-funded 'Low-carbon society: an enhanced modelling tool for the transition to sustainability' (LOCOMOTION) project plans to do, which continues and enlarges on the work of its predecessor, 'Modelling the Renewable Energy Transition in Europe' (MEDEAS).



Figure 9- Source: <https://meta.eeb.org>



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

Using so-called integrated assessment models (IAMs), which combine various socioeconomic and environmental models, LOCOMOTION, in which the EEB is involved, will develop a land-use submodel to track the trade-offs between different uses of land, including food production and biodiversity conservation. This drive is the latest in a series of EU policy initiatives that have striven to halt deforestation since the 2003 Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) action plan against illegal logging. Despite these efforts, deforestation continues apace at an alarming rate. An area the size of a football pitch is chopped down every second, while an area equivalent to the size of Greece is felled every year. In addition, more than half of the world's stock of tropical rainforests has been destroyed since the 1950s. Europe is the only part of the world that is bucking the deforestation trend. Although historically Europe lost much of its forest cover, reaching as low as 10% of its land area in the 17th century, recent times have seen that trend reversed. Today, over 40% of the EU's territory is made up of forests, with the largest proportions of forest cover lying in Finland, Sweden, Slovenia, Estonia and Latvia.

However, the headline statistics conceal a more complex reality. For example, while the EU protects forests at home, Europe effectively exports deforestation to other parts of the world by importing crops, meat and biofuels grown on cleared forests. Despite the EU's pledge to do its bit to halt global deforestation, Europe's demand for these products is projected to grow significantly by 2030, according to an internal study carried out by the European Commission.

Under the Natura 2000 umbrella, funding is available for forest preservation and protection at both the national and European levels, through the EU's Structural Funds, the Rural Development Fund, Maritime Fisheries Fund and other financial instruments. However, a substantial amount of these funds went unspent, according to an in-house analysis carried out by Fern.

The EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which was originally conceived as a food security instrument, now also funds conservation and custodianship. In terms of forests, the CAP finances such activities as afforestation, mixed agroforestry systems, conserving the genetic diversity of forests, and enhancing the climate resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems. This kind of funding will continue into the next CAP (2021-2027).



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019



Figure 10- Source: <https://ec.europa.eu>

## EUROPEAN STANDARDS FOR WASTE TREATMENT AND REALITY

Waste treatment operations are regulated by strict European standards. But what happens with these standards at the national level? A handy new guide empowers green groups to ensure compliance.

From plastic to electronic scrap, waste is on the rise all across Europe. The average EU citizen produces almost 500kg of waste a year, only 30% of which is recycled.

Much of the waste we produce is treated by waste management facilities that apply biological, mechanical and chemical processes. Such treatment aims to reduce the amount and hazardous nature of the waste. However, most waste treatment installations also emit carbon dioxide, ammonia and particulate matter into the air, as well as heavy metals and organic chemicals that can contaminate water and soil.

Luckily EU rules set minimum standards that should reduce or eliminate the environmental impact of waste treatment, covering a very wide range of activities, with a special focus on those leading to emissions of harmful pollutants into the air and water. The EEB and environmental NGOs point out, that while the new rules were being drafted and has coauthored a guide to help green groups act as watchdogs while they are implemented at the national level. The guide



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

offers an introduction to the implementation of waste treatment standards – known as the WT BREF – as well as specific recommendations for selected industrial sectors. It also provides concrete examples of successful implementation based on the EEB's experience.

## What are BREFs about?

'(BREFs) are industry-specific documents which define the most effective techniques that industry can employ to minimise the impact of its activities – the so called 'Best Available Techniques', or BATs.

The 'Best Available Techniques' conclusions included in the BREFs are used as a reference to set permit conditions, including the emission limits industrial installations must respect to comply with the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED), the EU law that aims to prevent and control the industry environmental impact.

The drafting of BREFs is coordinated by the European Commission in consultation with representatives from member states, industry and environmental protection groups. The adoption of the standards triggers a four-year deadline by which installations across Europe must be compliant with the requirements. Citizens' organisations have the right to be informed and consulted during the permitting process of industrial installations, and can formulate recommendations for the competent authorities to ensure the standards are turned into a reality with no delay.

## Best Available Techniques (BAT)

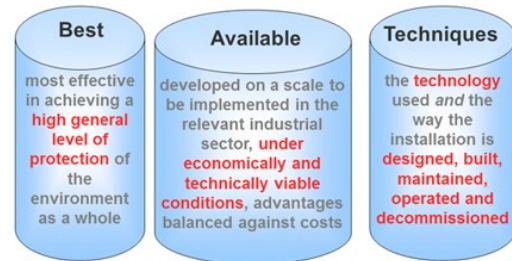


Figure 11- Source: <https://www.era-comm.eu>



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

## What's new with the WT BREF?

The revised Waste Treatment BREF brings in several improvements compared to the previous standard. First of all, the scope of the standards was extended to cover the mechanical treatment in shredders of metal waste, including Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), as well as end-of-life vehicles and their components.

In terms of air pollution, diffuse emissions of dust, heavy metals and other toxic substances will now have to be captured and properly treated in most waste treatment facilities that fall under the scope of the standards.

Regarding water pollution, a key highlight is the inclusion of requirements in case of indirect discharges. This means that the operators will have to track and, if necessary, treat at source toxic heavy metals or other persistent pollutants before discharging to a sewer or to an off-site waste water treatment plant. This is important as common waste water treatment plants may not be fitted to treat such pollutants.

However, the revised BREF still includes too many exemptions when it comes, for instance, to the biological treatment of waste. Moreover, a too vague formulation of the requirements concerning the management of hazardous wastes leaves national authorities with additional responsibility to ensure proper implementation, and curb current illegal practices, such as the dilution of hazardous wastes with non-hazardous ones, and their re-direction to cheaper, inefficient treatment options. It's a climate emergency –that much we know. ***Now, what is Europe going to do about it?***



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Figure 12- Source: <https://www.pv-magazine.com>

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: 'COAL REGIONS IN TRANSIT'

I – A new study from the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission released their findings and identified major solar PV potential for Europe's traditional coal regions. As much as 730 GW of solar capacity could be developed in these so-called 'Coal Regions in Transit', which could generate similar employment rates as that of the dying coal industry.

II – Council of Ministers adopted Coolaboration agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and KfW fund, from Frankfurt am Main, Germany. This fund will grant City of Gradiška for 10.3 million EUR, in order to build the system for waste water collection and treatment. City of Gradiška has this problem over the years and the solution will bring environmentally friendly solution, achieving higher quality of life and sustainable environmental protection.

III – Major environmental problem in BiH is constant issuance of permits for sHPP on rivers, thus endangering their environment and ecosystems. If the local habitants do not stand up, the investors are building sHPP overnight. One brave example of stand against the sHPP building is the example of brave women of village Kruščica, who



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

fight more than 500 days and nights. Group of women blocked a local bridge over the Kruščica River, preventing with their bodies construction machinery for building two SHPPs. Neither police violence, nor investor intimidation attempts, made these women quit defending their river from August 2017 to December 2018. The competent court upheld their goals to prevent the construction of hydropower plants. For their courage and protest for nature conservation, the EuroNature Award will be presented to them at a ceremony on 10 October.

IV - According to Greenpeace analysis, thermal power plants and coal and oil industries are responsible for 2/3 of the anthropogenic sulphur-dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, as recorded by NASA satellites. By the same analysis oil refineries and metals melting plants are the other major sources of pollution in the world. Combustion of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas are the largest source of SO<sub>2</sub> emissions, which results in catastrophic air pollution, and in this manner causing serious health problems of the population. Greenpeace appeals on the governments to invest in clean energy, and save billions of dollars for health care costs, saving thousands of lives every year.  
[https://storage.googleapis.com/planet4-india-stateless/2019/08/18765ca0-global-hotspot-and-emission-sources-for-so2\\_19th\\_august-2019.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/planet4-india-stateless/2019/08/18765ca0-global-hotspot-and-emission-sources-for-so2_19th_august-2019.pdf)



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

## NORTH MACEDONIA: NEW “TRASH FOR CASH” INITIATIVE

The enormous volume of waste created by the increasing consumption of the modern society puts a huge pressure and need to act decisively against this challenge, by all included in the chain of waste creation. The selective waste disposal, collection and recycling is an extremely important in the overall process for maintaining a clean and unpolluted environment. On top of that, this “trash”, put into the cycle of circular economy, can be turned into “cash” – or, in other words, into a “win-win” situations. To become feasible, a selective waste disposal system requires numbers, that is, the more people are part of it, the more successful it is. Thus, question is how to scale it up, and make it attractive, ***so citizens are motivated to become more efficient and faster involved in the process of selective waste disposal?***

### Option and Models

One quite successful concept, the so called “Deposit refund system” is a proven waste collection method that guarantees high material collection and recycling rates, and is recommended in many strategic documents by international organisations. And, it is already tested into practice. Ten European countries have a deposit refund system for beverage containers (plastic or metal): Sweden (since 1984), Iceland (since 1989), Germany (since 2003), Finland (since 1996), Norway (since 1999), Denmark (since 2002), the Netherlands (since 2005), Estonia (since 2005), Croatia (since 2006) and Lithuania, where the system was introduced in 2016 and resulted in a 92% collection rate in the second year of the operation.

Another option are the so called “reverse vending” machines. They operate on the same principle as standard vending machines (put money, get output), but are called a “reverse vending machine” due to the reverse process (put a product, get a money return). What began as an experiment in the 1970s in Norway has turned into a very successful global project that in a simple (but motivating) way keeps citizens involved, and our planet cleaner while encouraging people to recycle their waste.



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

About a year ago, a similar system was introduced in Istanbul, Turkey, allowing citizens to fill up their public transportation cards by returning plastic bottles and aluminium beverage cans.



Figure 13: RVM in Istanbul, Turkey; Source: Pakomak



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

## INTRODUCING RVM SYSTEM IN MACEDONIA

The concept of waste recycling through deposit refund schemes will soon be introduced in North Macedonia. The initiative of Pakomak to introduce reverse vending machines (RVMs) for plastic bottles and aluminium cans in our country is supported by the State Fund for Innovation and Technology Development, and the deployment of the first prototype is expected in the first half of 2020. In exchange for deposited beverage containers, the machines will issue “green points” that can be used to pay for products and public services, such as utility bills, public transit fares, and parking. This is a novelty (we have never had such a project on the territory of Macedonia so far) and it is a real innovation in the field of municipal waste collection and recycling.

The system will also ensure identification of citizens which are the most environmentally conscious and recycle the most quantity of plastic bottles and aluminium tins throughout the year, thereby giving those conscientious citizens the opportunity to receive additional benefits for their commitment.

What is the difference between this system and the systems in other countries?

In many Western countries (like for example in Germany) the deposit refund systems include a certain amount of money pre-charged in the prices of beverage products (per piece) - money that citizens / buyers pay as a kind of deposit for the packaging of the product they buy. The moment they return the packaging of that product to the RVM, they receive the money back in cash or in a form of a coupon that they can use at the supermarket where the RVM is located. So, the citizens get their money (deposit) they paid for buying the product, as a reward for their responsible waste disposal (selection).

The initiative promoted by Pakomak RVM system does not imply changing of product prices, that is, they will remain the same, and citizens will receive green points that can be converted into a discount for paying for public services or purchasing products in supermarkets that will be part of the Pakomak system's network.

The first advantage of this system is that it does not have to be introduced at the state level at the very beginning, but can be in phases from municipality to municipality. This reduces the initial need for large investments in several hundred of RVMs at the very start of the system.

The second advantage is that the citizens get really extra savings (or income), not their own money that they gave as a deposit by buying the product. Doing so would bring back substantial amount of money to those citizens who have a conscientious approach to waste selection.



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

A third advantage is that Pakomak's RVMs will be a Macedonian product with significantly lower prices than existing world-class models, and with lower maintenance costs. This makes this model accessible for mass use and faster coverage of the whole country. The material collected in these RVMs should be much cleaner and with a possibility of 100% recycling.

The system will be sustainable and Pakomak is already negotiating details with municipalities, manufacturers and recyclers who initially want to be part of the system. The project is being developed jointly with INOCEIT at UKIM (University Ss Cyril and Methodius), as a partner of Pakomak in this project supported by the Innovation and Technological Development Fund.

Circular (re)use of materials as a way forward...

Recycling practices are well known around the world, from long ago, but the impression is that in our country the awareness of this process of recycling is pretty low, especially when compared to the Western European countries. It takes time to change the habits of the population (or to remind ourselves of the good habits we used to have: no waste - all can be used). Numerous initiatives, aimed to raise public awareness are giving results, and this project by Pakomak is another step in that direction. Their collection network gathers over 25,000 tonnes of packaging waste annually, including: glass, plastic, paper, metal, wood and composite materials, making it the largest waste collection system in Macedonia and has been operating successfully for almost a decade. But it is obvious that the volume of recycling should and must be even bigger.

Through the reuse of waste (circulation of resources), recycling helps to reduce air and water pollution, energy use, the need for raw materials such as wood, plastics and minerals. Recycling reduces the pollution caused by the production of new products, which is one of the biggest contributors to reducing greenhouse gas emissions - a problem that regularly torments our country, and especially the capital, Skopje. In the world we live in, where natural resources are depleted day by day, recycling is of paramount importance and must not be underestimated, environmentally, socially and economically wise.



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

The Scandinavian countries are very high on the list of the world's most successful recyclers, along with Slovenia, Austria, and Germany (last year, the country managed to recycle 68% of its total municipal waste). How do they achieve this? First of all, these countries have succeeded in educating citizens about the benefits of recycling and have found a way to get everyone motivated and involved in the process. Now, their citizens know how and what can be recycled, can identify and separate different types of waste, and are willing to participate in the recycling initiative (they recognise the gain, both individual and collective). And the introduction of the Reverse Vending machines (RVMs) has played a big role in that. It is worth noting the example of Finland, whose residents through RVMs are returning as much as 90% of the total number of beverage containers, making this country the world's leader in recycling and recycling.

We from the Western Balkan countries are not the Scandinavians, but it does not stop us to learn from their examples, and try to make use from their best practices

## FLASH NEWS!

### *New State measures to Mitigate Air Pollution.*

The latest amendments to the new Law on Vehicles adopted by the Parliament in early August this year, introduce environmentally friendly stickers, subsidies for incorporating gas appliances into vehicles and replacing old vehicles with new ones.

As the Minister of Economy pointed out, the legislative changes refer to two important areas, namely traffic and ecology, and are the result of citizens' demands, with the main aim of reducing air pollution by vehicles.

The measure to subsidize the costs of installing a LPG system, methane or other alternative fuel in existing vehicles provides for subsidies up to 50% of the cost of the purchase and installation costs of the device, but not exceeding EUR 300 in MKD equivalent per vehicle and is expected to cover over 1,200 vehicles per year.



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

The measure of subsidizing the purchase of new vehicles with the deregistration of the old vehicle aims to increase the import of new vehicles compared to the used ones and will significantly speed up vehicle fleet renewal, which will significantly affect the reduction of ambient air pollution. Subsidies of 2,000 - 3,000 euros in MK denar equivalent are foreseen for the purchase of a new vehicle, and in the first year it is foreseen to cover over 200-500 vehicles.

Regarding the categorization of vehicles, the Ministry of Economy will start with the preparation of the Rulebook according to which the environmental labels for vehicles will be introduced, in accordance with the environmental standards. The law stipulates that drivers will have it on their vehicles on a voluntary basis, ie it is not an obligation of all drivers. The color of the stickers will depend on the vehicle, that is, which category of pollutant the vehicle is in.

The first ecological category includes vehicles with an exhaust emission level of EURO 5 and above, as well as vehicles with an exhaust emission of EURO 4 and EURO 3 fitted with a device for liquefied petroleum gas or compressed ground gas, hybrid vehicles and electric vehicles, as well as vehicles that have built-in equipment that reduces the emission of gases into the air and reach the standards of EURO 4.5 and higher. Second environmental category includes vehicles with emission levels of EURO 4 and EURO 3, and third environmental category includes vehicles with emissions level of EURO 2 and lower, as well as vehicles for which the manufacturer has not defined emission levels exhaust.

In the period of high pollution, and with the Decision of the Municipalities, citizens who can enter that municipality in the period when it will be adopted, will have to have a green sticker.

The effectiveness of all these measures is yet to be seen. Soon, as the winter months, when the air pollution is traditionally very high, are coming.



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# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Electronic Newsletter

Western Balkans and Turkey

August 2019

## INNOVATION IS IN THE AIR...

Bizifaj from Bitola, is a company that will be remembered as an innovator who developed a liquid product, a nano bio-polymer of biological origin (from environmentally friendly renewable polymers fully biodegradable and non-toxic), which absorbs PM 2.5 and PM 10 particles and prevents their emission. These particles are most often the result of dust generated during construction work, surface ore excavation, road construction, etc. The initiative and research have been supported under the Innovation Fund O2 Challenge for Air Pollution Reduction. In the next phase it is necessary to support the development of this product until its final commercialisation.

The sooner, the better!

Positive Effects of the new Energy Law in North Macedonia

Liberalisation of the electricity market in North Macedonia for small commercial customers and households was made possible with the adoption of the new Energy law in May 2018, which provided for these consumers to become eligible to choose their supplier from January 1st this year. Positive results from this measure for small commercial customers are already notable, as it decreased the prices for electricity procurement on the open market by 32.4%. On the other hand, the conditions on the regional electricity market have not yet been met for the households to enter the open market. According to the state Energy Regulatory Commission officials, regional electricity price would have to be by 50% lower to push these customers to leave the universal supplier and to choose a supplier on the open market.

## MARK THE GREEN DATES

**World Cleanup Day, 21st September & World Car-Free Day, 22nd September**

The goal of the World Clean up Day 2019 is to clean up as much litter as possible!

A Car-Free Day encourages motorists to give up their cars for a day.



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