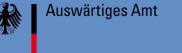
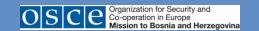
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Aarhus Centres Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Viktor Bjelić

Environmental Public Participation and Information Centres

Center for Environment, Bania Luka

Project implemented by:







Background

• In 2009/2010, OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina implemented a joint project with REC (funding from ENVSEC and Hungarian Embassy to BiH) to put the Aarhus Convention back on the government's agenda (ratification in September 2008).



Background

 In 2010: first visit of a joint government/NGO delegation to Aarhus Centres in Albania



 Successful preparation of the First National Implementation Report with NGO participation

2011

 Working with MDPI, OSCE executed a project to support implementation of the Convention in 8 municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



 Two regional meetings of Aarhus Centres in SEE hosted in Sarajevo (2010 and 2011) provide additional impetus for Aarhus Centres launch in BiH.

2012

- May 2012: City of Sarajevo and Misison to BiH sign a Memorandum of Understanding on establishing first Aarhus Centre in Sarajevo.
- Results follow: first Practical Manual on AC Implementation, national web platform (<u>www.aarhus.ba</u>), trainings for municipal staff and media, environmental law clinic.
- December 2012: EU Delegation approves a project (cofunded by OSCE) on establishment of Environmental Public Participation and Information Centres - Aarhus Centres in Banja Luka and Tuzla.
- Feb 2013: Aarhus Centre Sarajevo transforms into NGO.

2013

 April 2013: OSCE facilitates signing of Protocol on Cooperation between 3 Aarhus Centres (Aarhus centres network of Bosnia and Herzegovina).





The five main roles that civil society has in environmental management:

- 1) collect, analyze and disseminate environmental information,
- 2) contribute to policy-making and development processes in terms of the environment,
- 3) Perform operational and logistical functions on behalf of citizens through participation in decision making,
- assess the state of the environment and ensure compliance with legal provisions in the field of environmental protection, and
- 5) advocate democratic principles and human rights in the field of environment.

Focus of Aarhus Centers in forthcoming period and goals to be reached:

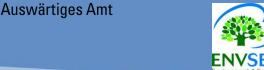
- •Environmental information sharing with interested parties and improving the legislation. (FOIA)
- •Bringing together different stakeholders in public hearings and practicing the democracy and dialog
- •Monitoring and tracking of environmental cases where the right of access to information or the right to participation in decision-making is denied
- •Supporting public on access to justice through legal counseling and support (two lawyers engaged).

Focus of Aarhus Centers in forthcoming period and results to be achieved:

- Assist local, regional and national governments, and NGOs in fulfilment of obligations under the AC.
- Increase access to environmental information to public and NGOs.
- Raise public awareness on rights under the AC.
- •Improve the impact of public participation in environmental matters.
- •Render more visibility to environmental (court) cases.

How Aarhus Centers will work on it?

- Opening dialogue with different stakeholders.
- •Establishing and publishing the database on relevant institutions and documents related to Aarhus Convention and Environment.
- Campaigning and building coalitions.
- •Emphasizing the importance of public hearings through community-based training events.
- •Educating and engaging young law graduates in environmental issues.





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Thank you for your attention!

Viktor Bjelić Center for Environment, Banja Luka

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