



23<sup>rd</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum:  
Water governance in the OSCE area – Increasing security  
and stability through co-operation  
Belgrade, 11-13 May 2015

## Environmental risks and challenges as opportunities for co-operation: Experiences of the REC

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## The Regional Environmental Center



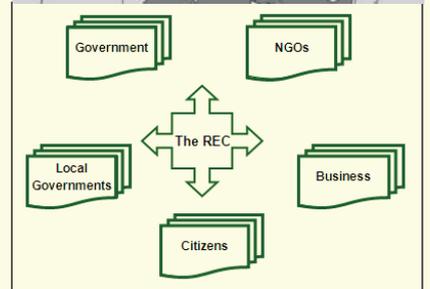
- Was established in 1990 by the USA, Hungary and the European Commission to enhance cooperation and address environmental issues in the region
- Has 25 years of experience in supporting stakeholders in CEE in:
  - transition to democracy and market economy
  - accessing the European Union
  - moving towards sustainable development and green growth
- Has implemented over 2.000 projects with total budget of over 200 MEUR through multi-stakeholder partnerships



# The REC today:



- is an international organisation with head office in Szentendre, Hungary
- is legally based on a charter signed by 31 countries and the European Commission
- has a Board of Directors with international members
- has a regional presence and offices in CEE with an international staff of approx. 160 employees
- runs projects in EU Member States (in CEE and EU-28); EU Enlargement Countries; Eastern Partnership Countries; and beyond
- is preparing for its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary that will be celebrated on 11 June 2015



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## The REC's main directions for work & specialisation

- In the spirit of Rio+20, the REC has two main directions for work:
  - Governance for Sustainability
  - Green Economy

### Specialisation of the REC:

Climate Change and Clean Energy

Education for Sustainable Development

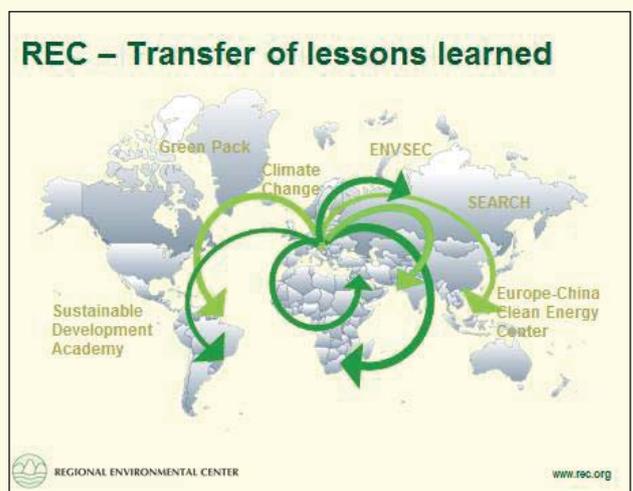
Environmental Management and Financing

Health and Environment

Law Development, Enforcement & Compliance

Local and Participatory Governance

Water Management



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# Partnership: The REC in the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC)

- REC is a partner in the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) that contributes to the reduction of environment and security risks through strengthened cooperation in four regions: Central Asia, Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and South Eastern Europe (SEE)
- Focus areas: Natural resources, climate change, hazardous substances, information and participation
- REC hosts ENVSEC Regional Desk SEE, and chaired ENVSEC Board in 2008, 2013 and 2014



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## Overview



Key messages and experiences based on the selected REC projects and activities in:

- Water governance
- Securing water resources
- Adaptation to climate change
- Sustainable water use
- Promoting dialogue and cooperation
- Empowering local communities (disaster risk reduction)



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# Water governance

## REC's reference projects:

- Harmonisation of water legislation with the EU acquis: projects in Albania, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Turkey
- Environmental Protection of International River Basins in the Black Sea countries
- Implementation of the Water Framework Directive in SEE countries
- Contribution to the work of international organisations and initiatives (ICPDR, ISRBC, UN ECE WC);
- The Danube Regional Project - Access to information and public participation in environmental decision making in the Danube countries

- Setting up institutional and legal frameworks, and strengthening skills for the implementation of the new EU Water Policy;
- Access to reliable environmental and water related information;
- Cooperation between neighbouring countries



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# Protecting water resources

## REC's reference projects:

- Promoting Replication of Good Practices for Nutrient Reduction and Joint Collaboration in Central and Eastern Europe (UNDP/GEF)
- Reducing Transboundary Pollution Risks within the Drina River Basin
- Preparation of Action Plans for the remediation of three heavily polluted areas (hot spots) in Serbia
- Compiling a Water Polluters Cadastre in Kosovo\*
- The REC Green Pack multimedia educational kit

- Targeted approach needed;
- Improving the integrated water management in other sectors (agriculture, energy, transport);
- Cross-sector dialogue between governmental bodies and agencies;
- Education as an instrument for success



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# Adapting to climate change

## REC's reference projects:

- CarpathCC - Preparatory action on climate in the Carpathian region – in-depth assessments of vulnerability of environmental resources and ecosystem-based adaptation measures
- WATER CoRe - Water scarcity and droughts; coordinated actions in 7 European regions
- MEDIATION - Methodology for Effective Decision-making on Impacts and Adaptation

- Reduce vulnerability in the most cost-effective way;
- Coordination between institutions on national and regional level;
- Exchange of information and knowledge;
- Comprehensive capacity building at all levels



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# Sustainable water use

## REC's reference projects:

- Support to the EC on the assessment of the Water Framework Directive implementation
- Technical Assistance to Jaspers' Beneficiary Countries
- Supporting the development and implementation of EU freshwater policies
- The Danube and Black Sea Task Force Secretariat
- Priority Environmental Investment Programme in SEE

- Continue preparing:
  - policy briefs,
  - integrated policy guideline documents,
  - technical assistance
- Active involvement of key stakeholders:
  - business sector;
  - finance community;
  - representatives of civil society and academia;
  - media

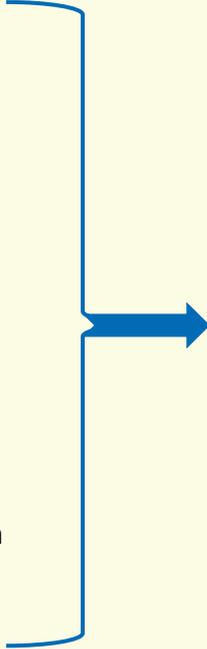


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# Promoting cooperation & dialogue

## REC's reference projects:

- Cooperation among key stakeholders at river basin levels (Danube, Sava, Tisza, Drina, Drin)
  - Development of the Drasviaty Lake Basin Management Program (ENVSEC)
  - Transboundary management of water resources: the Timok river (ENVSEC)
  - Neretva Delta Forum for the sustainable use of shared natural resources
  - Cross-border cooperation through environmental investment and planning in Western Balkan countries
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- Need for platform for cooperation and coordination;
  - Need for mechanisms for cross-border cooperation
  - Exchange of good practices between regions;
  - Active dialogue among key stakeholders;
  - Supporting public and youth participation



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## Disaster risk reduction: cross-border cooperation for empowering local communities



The spring 2014 flooding disaster in SEE demonstrated the need **to empower local communities to face emergency situations in coordination with national authorities.**

- **REC's concept developed in collaboration with Central European Initiative (CEI) and in comprehensive consultations of stakeholders at all levels:**
    - **Empowering local communities to strengthen disaster risk reduction and early warning capacities on the Drina river basin, as a base for local development**
    - Direct beneficiaries: Local administration and population of target municipalities along the Drina River Basin in the Republic of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina
    - Project implementation period: 3Q2015– 3Q2018
- ✓ Enforcing Disaster Risk Reduction strategies on the Drina River Basin, through strengthening **integrated approach to disaster risk assessment, early warning and management capacities at national, regional and local level;**
  - ✓ Developing a **pilot area for best practices** on integrated Central-Local and Cross-Border Disaster Risk Prevention and Multi-Hazard Early Warning strategies and action;
  - ✓ Formulating and adopting a **joint cross-border plan for local economic development** targeting environmental fields (rural tourism, agriculture)



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# Welcome to the REC!



25 Years • 1990-2015

REC • For a Sustainable Future

RESULTS EMPOWERMENT CHANGE



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