



Raising public awareness on environmental challenges through Aarhus Centers

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Why is public awareness important?

- Communities possess knowledge and expertise that are often underutilized;
- Better use of resources contributes to designing measures adapted to local needs in reducing vulnerabilities;
- Civil society organizations contribute to improved local disaster preparedness and shaping appropriate policies;
- Goal: to promote community-based DRR



Role of Aarhus Centers

- Public awareness requires the provision of accessible, adequate and targeted information;
- OSCE supports its participating States in implementing Aarhus Convention commitments through Aarhus Centers (ACs);
- AC deal with an array of different environmental challenges;
- An ENVSEC project demonstrated that 18 out of 35 AC in 7 pS, had previous experience in DRR;
- Aarhus centers cooperate with a wide range of stakeholders, contribute to strengthening good governance, which increases resilience of societies.



Practical examples

- **ACs in Serbia** were closely engaged in flood related DRR outreach campaigns;
- The first DRR Action Alliance established between AC Nis and local authorities, Sector for Emergency Management, Water Utility Company, Ministry responsible for environmental issues, Hydrometeorological Institute, Red cross and media;
- Staff from two ACs from Kragujevac and Nis participated in collecting data for an analysis on gender-specific aspects of flooding in 4 heavily affected towns.



Lessons learnt

- OSCE supports ACs since 2002;
- At the 5th Session of the MoP in Maastricht, OSCE organized a side event that convened representatives of ACs in all 14 countries;
- Important aspect of AC work is cooperation through networks with a wide range of state institutions, local authorities, governmental agencies, experts, CSOs, academia, media;
- Creating synergies and avoiding duplication.



Ways to further empower ACs for DRR

- Thanks to funding from Switzerland, Austria and Finland, OCEEA started a cross regional ENVSEC project related to strengthening capacities of ACs in DRR in 7 countries;
- Initial findings show that considerable knowledge exists among ACs but technical aspects of DRR and public participation tools in DRR are needed;
- Activities foreseen by ENVSEC include capacity building of AC for DRR and support to establishing resilient communities.



Thank you for your attention

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