

REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COHESION: Towards SEE Urban Sustainable Development Strategy (RENCO)

REGIONALNA KOHEZIJA ZA ZAŠTITU ŽIVOTNE SREDINE: U susret strategiji urbanog održivog razvoja Jugoistočne Evrope*

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APSTRAKT

Problemi u urbanom održivom razvoju država Jugoistočne Evrope nastaju usled činjenice da se parametri urbane održivosti ne tretiraju kao priroitetni i često nisu dovoljno inkorporirani u politike i strategije. Rangiranje pitanja urbane održivosti (kao što su na primer pitanja saobraćaja, industrijskih kompleksa, buke i dr.), njihovo inkorporiranje i tretiranje kao priroitenih bi omogućilo kvalitetnije projekte za urbanu životnu sredinu i poboljšalo procese zaštite životne sredine u urbanim prostorima Jugoistočne Evrope. To bi zajedno sa efikasnom i efektivnom primenom globalnih politika i zakonodavstva zaštite životne sredine na regionalnom-nacionalnom-lokalnom nivou i razmenom iskustava i praksi između urbanih prostora regiona, stvorilo jasnu viziju održivog urbanog razvoja u Jugoistočnoj Evropi, što bi dovelo do formiranja okvira za podršku budućoj strategiji urbanog održivog razvoja regiona.

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Projekat je zamišljen kao sredstvo za promociju pitanja urbane održivosti kao osnovnih činilaca opšte vizije održivog razvoja u Jugoistočnoj Evropi, i osvrce se na potrebu za efikasnijom i efektivnijom primenom globalnih politika i za harmonizacijom politika u samim zemljama/teritorijama ucesnicama kao i na potrebu prekogranične saradnje. Projekat je značajan kao pomoć u razvoju održivog društva kroz regionalnu saradnju i partnerstva doprinoseći održivom razvoju do sada često konfliktne regije i tako poboljšanju uslova života svih, a naročito u urbanim naseobinama.

KLJUČNE REČI: urbani održivi razvoj, regionalna kohezija (povezanost), strategija urbanog održivog razvoja, uključivanje životne sredine u druge sektorske politike, integrisani pristup.

ABSTRACT

Problems regarding the urban sustainable development in the SEE (South Eastern European) countries start (and finish) with the fact that urban sustainability issues are not ranked as priorities and often not enough incorporated in policies. Ranking urban sustainability issues (land use, energy, climate change, transport, air pollution etc.), incorporating them in policies and addressing them as priorities would produce better performances for urban environmen. Together with the efficient and effective implementation of the global environmental policies and legislation at the regional-national-local level and exchange of experiences and practice between urban areas in the region, it will create the clear vision for sustainable urban development in the SEE region, leading to a framework to support future urban sustainable development strategy in the region.

The purpose of this paper is to present the project Regional Environmental Cohesion : Towards SEE Urban Sustainable Development Strategy (RENCO) which begun in July, 2007, as well as to mobilize stakeholders as interested parties to support implementation. In addition, the paper presents the basis of the EU Urban Environment Thematic Strategy.

The project is foreseen as the tool for promotion of urban sustainability issues as the key constituents of sustainable development vision in general, throughout the SEE region, in order to address the need for more efficient and effective implementation of global policies as well as for the harmonization of policies inside the participating

countries/territories and across their respective borders. The importance of the project lays in helping to develop more sustainable society through regional environmental cooperation and partnership thus effectively bringing the region from conflict-to-sustainable developed region and improving the quality of life of all, especially in urban settlements.

KEY WORDS: *urban sustainable development, regional partnerships/cohesion, thematic strategy on the urban environment, inclusion of environmental issues in different sectors, integrated approach, urban sustainability issues*

1. BACKGROUND

The project “Regional Environmental Cohesion: Towards SEE Urban Sustainable Development Strategy” is foreseen as the tool for promotion of urban sustainability issues as the key constituents of sustainable development vision in general, throughout the SEE region, in order to address the need for more efficient and effective implementation of global policies as well as for the harmonization of policies inside the participating countries/territories and across their respective borders. The importance of the project lays in helping to develop more sustainable society through regional environmental cooperation and partnership thus effectively bringing the region from conflict-to-sustainable developed region and improving the quality of life of all, especially in urban settlements. The active participation of regional civil society organizations (as well as other stakeholders from different major groups) will promote and strengthen effective networking and exchange of experiences as part of bottom-up initiatives which are needed as a way of dealing with current political constraints on the environmental perspective in the urban areas of SEE region. It will also reduce the gap between the great will of the SEE countries/territories to accede to the EU and low level of the knowledge on the substance of the process in the environmental sector.

2. DEFINITIONS and MEANINGS

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - Sustainable development is *people-centred* in its aim to improve the quality of human life and it is *conservation-based* in the fact that it is conditioned by the need to respect nature's ability to provide resources and life-support services. In this perspective, sustainable development means *improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems*.

The idea of each generation's duty to its successors is at the heart of the concept of sustainable development and was captured by the Brundtland Commission (WCED, 1987) in its report «Our Common Future», which defined sustainable development as «*development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*». One of the many definitions that followed that of the Brundtland Commission is for example, the one that defines sustainable development as the development that satisfies three basic conditions: (1) its rates of use of renewable resource do not exceed their rates of regeneration; (2) its

rates of use of non-renewable resources do not exceed the rate at which sustainable renewable substitutes are developed; and (3) its rates of pollution do not exceed the assimilative capacity of the environment (Daly, 1991). However, sustainability is broad in concept and extends the definition beyond environmental considerations and include issues of social equity and justice (bringing “human face” as the condition for sustainability).

The economic growth is also considered as highly important issue. For instance, the «Charter of European Cities and Towns Towards Sustainability» states that the main basis for sustainable development is «*to achieve social justice, sustainable economies, and environmental sustainability. Social justice will necessarily have to be based on economic sustainability and equity, which require environmental sustainability*» (ICLEI-International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, 1994).

Sustainable development is the main general goal for the national policies of all the members of UN, the international policies, and has been in particular integrated into the core of EU policies and law.

Agenda 21 proposes the following specific actions related to the national level:

- To strengthen institutional structures to allow the full integration of environmental and

development issues, at all levels of decision-making, and

- To adopt a national strategy for sustainable development.

As the follow-up *World Summit for Sustainable Development Plan for Action* (2002) pointed out obligation for each country to adopt SDS (until 2005).

The EU Sustainable Development Strategy (10917/06/EC) sets out the following overall policy guiding principles:

- Promotion and protection of fundamental rights,
- Solidarity within and between generations,
- Open and democratic society,
- Involvement of citizens,
- Involvement of businesses and social partners,
- Policy coherence and governance,
- Policy integration,
- Use of best available knowledge,
- Precautionary principle,
- Making polluters pay.

The Sustainable Development Strategy (EU Strategy, 2001) provides the broad framework for promoting sustainable consumption and production in the EU. At Lisbon EU leaders stated their objective of making the Union the world’s ‘most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy’ by 2010. The adoption of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy in 2001 added a third environmental pillar to the Lisbon Strategy. The need to pursue, in a balanced way, economic growth, social improvements and environmental protection was translated into detailed objectives and actions. The Strategy identifies six key areas: climate change, health, natural resources, poverty and exclusion, ageing and demography, land use and mobility. All

areas are very much connected with urban sustainability. The Sixth Community Environment Action Programme [1600/2002/EC] calls for the adoption of policies and approaches that contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the countries which are candidates for accession ('Candidate Countries') building on the transposition and implementation of the *acquis* (see more in "Sustainable Development and Environment towards Europe in 95+ steps", 2006). The 6EAP complemented by seven thematic strategies with clear objectives and targets in key areas: air quality, soil protection, sustainable use of pesticides, protection and conservation of the marine environment, waste prevention and recycling, and sustainable use and management of natural resources and urban environment.

URBAN SUSTAINABILITY -«Improving the quality of life in a city, including ecological, cultural, political, institutional, social and economic components without leaving a burden on the future generations. A burden which is the result of a reduced natural capital and an excessive local debt. Our aim is that the flow principle, that is based on an equilibrium of material and energy and also financial input/output, plays a crucial role in all future decisions upon the development of urban areas.»
(URBAN21 Conference, Berlin, July 2000)

For the purpose of this project* the definition set forth by Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite (1992) is taken in the account: *«that (urban sustainability) should be defined to include the minimisation of the use of non-renewable resources, the achievement of the sustainable use of renewable resources, staying within the absorptive capacity of local and global waste-absorption limits and meeting basic human needs.»*

The half of the world's population (3 billion people) lives in towns and cities♦. A distinction is often drawn between major environmental threats to human life on the planet Earth on the one hand and local concerns, which are more amenable to balancing on the other. In this type of discussions, cities and urban regions play an important role. Over the next quarter-century virtually all population growth will be in urban areas in less developed countries. Cities contribute to a large extent to global environmental problems but at the same time people living in cities are confronted with environmental damage, pollution, health and social and economic problems. They are prolific users of natural resources and generators of waste and produce most of the greenhouse gases that are causing global climate change. They often also degrade local water quality, deplete aquifers, pollute the marine environment, pollute the air and consume the land. It is estimated that 80 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions originate from cities. The contribution of cities to national, regional and global environmental problems is increasing. Furthermore, many decisions to actually implement mitigating measures, or to enhance service delivery to citizens, are taken at the level of municipalities.

* as suggested by REC (Regional Environmental Center)

♦ according to UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme)

Different policies, including transport, land use, regulatory, investment, fiscal and pricing policies to improve the urban situation have been designed and partly implemented. However, actual urban developments show that these policies have not been able to stop the decrease of sustainability of our cities. This calls for advanced methods of policy impact assessment and policy evaluation together with measurement and identification of the direct and indirect, the short-term and long-term effects, in a transparent way.

Goals to make cities more sustainable have been formulated (e.g. European Environment Agency, 1995):

- minimising the consumption of space and natural resources,
- rationalising and efficiently managing urban flows,
- protecting the health of the urban population,
- ensuring equal access to resources and services,
- maintaining cultural and social diversity.

URBAN AREA – In this project the “boundaries” of the meaning of the term “urban” are set in accordance with its definition as a community or settlement with a population of 2000 and more occupied by buildings and related facilities, taking in account interest of all countries/territories participating.

3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND URBAN SUSTAINABILITY IN THE SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

3.1. Present Situation in the Region

South Eastern Europe is a region still in the process of transition. UNDP reports that the level of economic development and the social situation in the countries of South-Eastern Europe is lagging behind the countries of the EU, calling for radical measures to increase the economic growth. Rapid economic growth remains the predominant driver for the policies of countries and territories. Short-term economic gains (especially in the conditions of low GDP-Gross Domestic product) which mostly create unsustainable development patterns seem to be more attractive than the longer-term benefits associated with integration of sustainability requirements into policy making. In the Environmental Policy in South – Eastern Europe Report (United Nations Development Programme-UNDP, 2007) it is stated that *the first post conflict priorities were focused on return of refugees and displaced persons as well as on rehabilitation of basic infrastructure, such as water supply, electricity, roads and accommodation. In the mid term, the main goals include establishment and maintenance of the rule of law and macroeconomic stability, acceleration of economic growth and improvement of living standards through, inter alia, completing privatisation processes, attracting higher level of foreign direct investments, and development of small and medium sized enterprises.* In most countries a process of decentralisation and de-concentration of government is under way, transferring

significant responsibilities related to sustainable development to municipalities and regions.

Restructuring of industry has led to a gradual improvement in its environmental performance in some countries, but new problems have emerged across the region such as demographic decline in rural areas and *the pressure of uncontrolled urbanisation around the cities* and along the coasts.

As noted, all countries have developed and adopted national environmental action plans (or other forms of environmental strategies), and poverty reduction strategies aiming to deal with the environmental and social dimensions of sustainability. New environmental and natural resource legislation has been adopted aiming to achieve compliance with EU directives and international agreements, but its implementation is still in its early stages.

Sustainable development strives to find innovative solutions to challenges, the ones that do not place stress on the natural and human environments beyond their carrying capacities with the emphasis on improving the quality of life of all. Transboundary cooperation between countries sharing one or more natural resources is therefore indispensable for creating common frameworks that promote their sustainable use.

3.1.1. Some of the main THEMES related to Urban Sustainability in SEE

Land use and urban planning

The countries of SEE have experienced intensive migrations, in general towards the cities, in the last 15 years caused by the war and the effects of economic restructuring. Rapid increase in urban population is creating a major burden on public services and infrastructure, while physical and urban planning cannot keep up with the urban sprawl. Human Development Report (UNDP,2007) states that the percentage of urban population in Bosnia and Herzegovina has grown from 31.3% in 1975 to 45.7% in 2005, in Albania from 32.7% to 45.4, in FYR Macedonia from 50.6% to 68.9%. Environmental Policy in South-Eastern Europe report (UNDP,2007) shows that urban population in 2000 was around 38% , and Serbia and Montenegro (taken together) measured up to 56.4% in 2003 (Stojanović, Vojković, 2003).

Many suburban areas have developed illegally, without urban infrastructure and services. As a result, some of the natural and landscape values that represent an important comparative advantage of the region are threatened and the quality of life in urban areas decreased owing to overcrowded neighbourhoods and inaccessibility of infrastructure and amenities. Transport problems in urban centres have also been exacerbated. Urban areas are facing the problems of increased volume of generated waste, air pollution (impacts of heating and transport), change in land use, etc. especially where the poorest population lives.

The physical planning and permitting system cannot always cope with the tremendous economic and political pressure for new construction and shaping the plans in favour of major investors.

Municipalities often lack the expertise needed for good urban planning and lack a holistic view of the urban development problems. This is visible especially in urban transport, where pedestrian zones often lack connections, bicycle paths are virtually non-existent and individual car traffic is preferred.

Better inter-sectoral cooperation is required to ensure efficient permitting procedures, exchange of information and the integration of biodiversity, natural and cultural heritage concerns into all relevant sectors as well as capacity building on how to deal with urban development.

Transport and its related impacts

Air quality, especially urban areas, congestion and mobility/access are growing problems for cities. Promotion of public transport is the key issue, but it should be done in conjunction with urban traffic plans.

The number of personal vehicles is steadily increasing in all countries and territories, mostly in the form of second hand vehicles imported from Western Europe. Along with this trend most of the investment in the transport sector has been in the improvement of the road networks, long distance highway corridors, encouraged also by the international community as a precondition for economic integration of the region and communication among neighbours.

At the same time public transport and railways have been mostly neglected. Promotion of public transport is the key issue, but it should be done in conjunction with urban traffic plans.

Energy and climate change

Energy production and energy efficiency in cities is a latent problem. In the formerly centrally planned economies, the real price of energy was distorted and energy efficiency was rarely a criterion in the construction of public premises and housing. Increasing prices of energy push especially the poor to search for alternative sources of energy. Home combustion of charcoal, timber and waste is widespread in the poorest suburban areas.

All countries in the region are Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change of 1992. Serbia, Albania, Croatia, Macedonia and Montenegro ratified the Kyoto Protocol between 2004 and 2007, and other countries are in the process of preparing its ratification.

Emission reductions in the countries are possible owing to the current high energy intensity, reliance on brown coal for energy production, low energy efficiency of the domestic sector and high potential for renewable resources such as solar, biomass, hydro and wind, maintaining high share of rail and public transport instead of road and private transport; bio-diesel, and improving energy efficiency or phase-out of energy consuming industries. Unfortunately, the climate change is still widely perceived as an international problem rather than a real issue in the domestic context.

Waste management

The amount of municipal waste, construction waste, packaging, end of life vehicles and similar waste streams have increased in the region resulting from new production and consumption patterns.

The municipalities lack expertise in the development of waste management plans, which would build on alternative approaches to the problem instead of simple waste collection and land filling.

Sustainable society

To recall that the nine principles* of a sustainable society are:

- respect and care for the community of life,
- improve the quality of human life,
- conserve the earth’s vitality and diversity,
- minimize the depletion of non-renewable resources,
- keep within the earth’s carrying capacity,
- change personal attitudes and practices,
- provide a national framework for integrating development and conservation,
- create a global alliance.

Each of the SEE countries is in a position to make shortcuts in progress towards urban sustainable development by applying mechanisms tailored to their conditions and learning from the experience of more developed countries.

3.2. Towards EU - *Securing Urban Sustainable Development Through Membership in the European Union*

At the moment, joining the EU is top priority for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The efforts to comply with EU requirements are perceived to be a key driver in the sustainability and better management of many economic and environmental initiatives and efforts.

Overall aim of the *EU Urban Environment Thematic Strategy* is to improve the environmental performance and quality of urban areas and to secure a healthy living environment for Europe’s urban citizens, reinforcing the environmental contribution to sustainable urban development while taking into account the related economic and social issues. *The EU Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment* constitutes an important step towards creation of healthier and future oriented environments, building on series of initiatives that have contributed to the development of Europe’s policy on the urban environment. As noted above, it is part of the European Community’s Sixth Environment Action Programme “Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice”, and is one of seven thematic strategies in the Programme introduced to

* IUCN/UNEP/WWF: “Caring for the Earth”, 1991

provide a holistic approach to key environmental issues that are characterised by their complexity, the diversity of actors concerned and the need for innovative and multiple solutions. As set out in the Sixth Environment Action Programme, the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment has the objective of *promoting an integrated horizontal approach across Community policies and improving the quality of urban environment, taking into account progress made in implementing the existing co-operation framework, reviewing it where necessary, and addressing:– the promotion of Local Agenda 21;– the reduction of the link between economic growth and passenger transport demand;– the need for an increased share in public transport, rail, inland waterways, walking and cycling modes;– the need to tackle rising volumes of traffic and bring about a significant decoupling of transport growth and GDP growth;– the need to promote the use of low emission vehicles in public transports;– the consideration of urban environment indicators.*

The Thematic Strategy for the Urban Environment is focused on four cross-cutting themes which are essential to the long-term sustainability of towns and cities, which have clear connections to the economic and social pillars of sustainable development and where the most significant progress can be achieved.

These *themes*, which have been determined in consultation with the EU Expert Group on the Urban Environment and other stakeholders, are:

- sustainable urban management,
- sustainable urban transport,
- sustainable construction and
- sustainable urban design.

One of the main challenges of improving the urban environment lies in the diversity of environmental issues, the multitude of actors and factors influencing the urban environment and the fragmented approach taken so far.

In all four themes sustainable urban development involves an integrated, long-term approach to planning and development.

Integrated approaches include long-term strategic visions and link different policies at different administrative levels to ensure coherency. Integrated environmental management also means tackling related issues together such as urban management and governance, integrated spatial planning, economic wellbeing and competitiveness, social inclusion, and environmental stewardship.

The Thematic Strategy calls on the national and regional authorities to support municipalities in achieving more integrated management at the local level. Many solutions already exist in certain cities but are not sufficiently disseminated or implemented. Promoting Europe's best practices, facilitating their widespread use

throughout Europe and encouraging effective networking and exchange of experiences between cities will help Member States and local authorities.

Due to the diversity of urban areas and existing national, regional and local obligations it was difficult to establish common standards on all urban environment issues. It was decided that legislation would not be the best way to achieve the objectives of this Strategy. Most Member States and local authorities supported this approach, questioning the need for binding EU obligations on environmental management and urban transport plans.

Sustainability is defined through strategies that work to conserve energy, resources and land and that work for equity and the health of people as well as the environment. Sustainable urban development, while respectful of cultural heritage and traditions, would work to encourage alternatives and choices, and to inform decision-makers and consumers as to the advantages of sustainability.

THE MEASURES

Need to support local authorities in adopting integrated management techniques will be achieved through the :

1) Guidance on integrated environmental management

Adopting an integrated approach to the management of the urban environment helps avoid conflicts between the range of policies and initiatives that apply in urban areas and helps achieve a long-term vision for the development of the city in addition to the voluntary initiatives Local Agenda 21 and Aalborg Commitments. In the SEE region the following cities have signed to Aalborg Commitments : Shkodra and Tirana (Albania); Kotor and Herceg-Novi (Montenegro); Smederevska Palanka (Serbia); Kamenica, Lipjan and Podujeva (Kosovo territory); and Ohrid (Macadonia).

Clearly defined objectives, targets, accepted responsibilities, procedures for monitoring progress, public consultation, review, audit and reporting are crucial for effective implementation of measures.

An Environmental Management Plan:

- covers the whole town or city,
- links different environmental issues (such as energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, water use and treatment, waste, noise, air quality, nature and biodiversity, transport and mobility, design, natural and man-made risks, sustainable construction, related health issues, and quality of life as a whole) in an integrated and co-ordinated way, and
- provides information on the current environmental situation, sets targets for improvement and actions to meet those targets.

An Environmental Management System:

- is a clear procedure to manage environmental goals and targets,

- is a system that includes target setting, consultation, review, auditing and reporting ,
- defines the organisational structure, responsibilities, procedures, processes and practices needed to achieve environmental goals and targets,
- provides regular reports to the public,
- can be used to implement an Environmental Management Plan ,
- can also be used to help improve a town or city authority's own internal environmental performance.

Many successful cities have put in place environmental management systems such as EMAS or ISO 14001 to ensure the delivery of policy objectives and provide public scrutiny on progress. Technical guidance gives reference to the most relevant EU environmental legislation e.g. air, noise, water, waste and energy efficiency directives.

2) Guidance on sustainable urban transport plans

Urban transport has a direct impact on air pollution, noise, congestion and CO₂ emissions and it is fundamental to citizens and business. The adoption and implementation of urban transport plans is obligatory in certain Member States. Some cities adopt plans on a voluntary basis to improve quality of life or in order to comply with EU standards to protect human health (e.g. air quality).

Effective, transport planning requires long-term vision to plan financial requirements for infrastructure and vehicles, to design incentive schemes to promote high quality public transport, safe cycling and walking and to coordinate with land-use planning at the appropriate administrative levels. Transport planning should take account of safety and security, access to goods and services, air pollution, noise, greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption, land use, cover passenger and freight transportation and all modes of transport. Solutions need to be tailor-made, based on wide consultation of the public and other stakeholders, and targets must reflect the local situation.

A Sustainable Urban Transport Plan:

- covers the whole town or city,
- covers all types of transport,
- deals with the environmental, social and economic aspects of transport,
- tries to promote public transport, cycling and walking,
- tries to serve all of the town or city's citizens.

A Sustainable Urban Transport Plan will include measures to ensure that the social and economic development of the town or city is balanced against managing the environmental impacts of transport.

3) Support for EU wide exchange of best practices

Improving local authorities' access to existing solutions is important to allow them to learn from each other and develop solutions adapted to their specific situation. The

information has to be well structured, easily available and supported by the right experts.

- Networking and Demonstration Projects
- Network of National Focal Points on Urban Issues

4) Commission Internet Portal for Local Authorities

Thematic portals on the Europa website for certain specialist audiences will be developed in order to ease the specific data requests.

5) Training

Many local authorities need specific skills to adopt an integrated approach to management involving cross-sector cooperation and training on specific environmental legislation, effective public participation and encouraging changes in citizens' behaviour.

6) Drawing on Other Community Support Programmes

The Strategy draws on the opportunities presented by other policies in order to achieve its objectives.

- Cohesion Policy

Cohesion Fund and Structural Funds are proposed and include significant opportunities for assistance to address environmental priorities in urban areas (e.g. waste management, urban waste-water treatment, air quality, clean urban public transport, energy efficiency, rehabilitation of contaminated land and integrated strategies for urban regeneration).

- Research

Further research is considered useful on innovative urban management, rehabilitation of the man-made environment including the cultural heritage, environmental risk, energy efficiency, clean vehicles and alternative fuels, mobility, safety and security.

SYNERGIES WITH OTHER POLICIES

This Strategy is cross-cutting, covering many environmental media and issues.

- Climate change

Priority areas for local authorities to decrease greenhouse gas emissions are transport and building.

Wider implementation of *Sustainable Urban Transport Plans* including specific measures to promote low CO₂-emission and energy-efficient vehicles will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the local level.

Sustainable construction improves energy efficiency with a corresponding decrease in CO₂ emissions. Local Authorities can promote such methods by raising awareness, setting and enforcing standards where possible and adopting best practices for their own buildings and buildings that they commission through green public procurement. In this context, retrofitting of existing buildings is of significant importance.

European Standardisation Organisation has been given the mandate to develop methods to assess the integrated environmental performance of buildings (beyond energy efficiency) to allow comparison of buildings across Europe and encourage exchange of best practices.

- Nature and Biodiversity

Sustainable urban design (appropriate land-use planning) will help reduce urban sprawl and the loss of natural habitats and biodiversity. Integrated management of the urban environment should foster sustainable land-use policies which avoid urban sprawl and reduce soil-sealing, include promotion of urban biodiversity and raise awareness for urban citizens.

- Environment and the Quality of Life
- Sustainable use of natural resources

Better urban management can reduce the impacts of day to day use of resources such as energy and water. Avoiding urban sprawl through high density and mixed-use settlement patterns offers environmental advantages regarding land use, transport and heating contributing to less resource use per capita.

BUILDING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE – MONITORING PROGRESS

To monitor the effectiveness of this Strategy, up to date and accessible urban data is needed. The Strategy underlines the indicators role as a tool for policy, monitoring, transparency and communication. They are qualitative and quantitative targets and timetables against which the progress can be measured and evaluated.

The 1994 Aalborg Charter (and its re-launch in the 1996 Lisbon Plan) reflects these needs, by committing the signatory local authorities (now more than 1,860), to the use of indicators as a supporting tool for policy-making, useful to describe and monitor current state and progress.

The outcome of the numerous and extensive consultation rounds with towns and cities, was the agreement on a list of 10 common issues/indicators : Citizens' Satisfaction with the Local Community; Local Contribution to Global Climate Change (and/or local Ecological Footprint); Local Mobility and Passenger Transportation; Availability of Local Public; Open Areas and Services; Quality of Local Air; Children's Journeys to and from School; Sustainable Management of the Local Authority; and Local Businesses; Noise Pollution; Sustainable Land Use; Products Promoting Sustainability. European data on urban environment issues will be improved, in order to evaluate the environmental performance of European urban areas over time.

Further Urban Audit is taken based on indicators describing the living conditions in a number of EU cities, covering economic, social and environmental aspects.

4. METHODOLOGY/DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

4.1. Goal

The problems regarding urban sustainable development in the SEE region start and finish with the fact that urban sustainability issues are not ranked as priorities and

often not enough incorporated in policies. Ranking urban sustainability issues, incorporating them and addressing them as priorities would produce better projects for urban environment, improving the environmental performance of SEE urban areas. Together with the efficient and effective implementation of the global environmental policies and legislation at the regional-national-local level and exchange of experiences and practice between urban areas in the region, it will create the clear vision for sustainable urban development in the SEE region leading to a framework to support future urban sustainable development strategy in the region.

4.2. Specific objectives

The objectives, which will lead to the overall goal of the project and which can be realistically achieved during the course of the project implementation were identified through strategy analyses. Those are:

- **Diffuse source pollution to be recognized by wider public**, as the current situation shows that the public reacts mostly on the point source pollution. Informing the public of all existing and different causes of pollution would broaden the scope of the public positive actions. The percentage of questionnaire responses acknowledging this issue comparing to the overall number of responses will present the level of achievement of this objective (in absolute average No 5 per country/territory=30).
- **Increasing the awareness regarding current conditions and possible solutions in the urban environment sector** will bring changes of the perception towards development and quality of the life. This is best achieved through the good media coverage of the planned activities and the number of press releases in relevant, popular, media will indicate to what level. The percentage of new civil initiatives on the subject of urban sustainability, third party recognition of the subject, based on the information gathered from and during the course of this project, and compared to the current number of similar initiatives will be indicative as well (No. of relevant press releases, media coverage (1x6=6); Percent of new civil initiatives on this subject (1x6=6)).
- **To increase knowledge on the substance of the process of implementation of global policies in the terms of the EU accession process**, in order to clear existing common misunderstandings and give support to urban areas for implementing global norms, agreements and conventions. This will be indicated by the number of participants (stakeholders and beneficiaries) on the meetings in each and all countries of the region included in the project and the percentage of those who are actively contributing, those willing to contribute to the process compared to their overall number (No. of persons participating in each and all countries/territory (30 per country territory – average=180); Percentage of those actively contributing (50%)).

- **To increase the political commitment for sustainable urban development** as they have the decisive role in implementing environmental legislation. The percentage of positive responses and recognition from decision makers on the outputs of the project will present the level of achievement of this objective (Percent of positive responses from decision makers on the project outputs (Absolute No 6)).
- **Environmental issues to be included across different sectors** in order to tackle down cause-effect relations that determine the cross sector nature of the urban sustainability itself. Percentage of different sectors present and the number of their representatives attracted during the course of the project is important in achieving this objective. The average satisfaction with cross sector cooperation (overall and mean) will be indicative as well as the prerequisite of the sustainable development in general (Percent of different sectors' presence No. of their representatives (in absolute No 3 sectors x 3 representatives x 6 partners=54).
- **Recognizing global-regional-local linkages** will enable urban areas to better assess and prioritize their local environmental concerns and to have a voice in national-regional-global environmental agreements. Number of new persons/organizations as well as the major stakeholders interested in bringing these issues closer to the wider public is indicative to this objective (No. of new persons/organisations interested (in absolute 6)).

Achieving the above stated objectives will directly contribute to the addressing of the urban environment issues (land use and urban planning, transport, energy and climate change, waste management and water) as priorities, demonstrating the sustainable development approaches for the development of policies and future regional practical demonstration projects as they are intrinsically linked to the three pillars of the sustainable development and recognize the need for structures led from the top with political commitment in addition.

4.3. Activities

The following detailed course of activities is and will be taken by each partner during the course of time of the project implementation.

- Assessment of the environmental US issues and policies in each country/territory.
- Regional analyses on core issues of urban sustainability.
- Creation of the side event on EfE Conference 2007- –Held on October^Δ 11th, 2007. There were 56 participants present from 10 countries/territories (Serbia, Kosovo,

^Δ One of the indicators of success is that event is among the few events pointed out in the official report of Conference on the official web site of Conference <http://www.efe-belgrade2007.org/>

Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Hungary, The Netherlands, Kazakhstan and Moldova) and 7 stakeholder groups (NGO, International organizations, Research / Academia, Central Government, Local Government, Business, Media). The brochure was printed and distributed in 420 copies. Media coverage included project and partners websites. This was the only one side event at Belgrade 2007 Conference with multiethnic representatives from Kosovo territory.

- Partnership building with defined stakeholders and wider public through opinions and outputs of activities; The questionnaire on urban sustainability issues will be developed with inclusion of opinions of Ad-hoc Expert Committee, an disseminated on the meetings with stakeholders throughout the region.
- Creation of the final assessment regional report on urban sustainability – RENCO: Towards SEE USDS.
- Presentation and dissemination of the outreach document (final report).

The methods are:

- Comparative analyses of the urban sustainability issues and policy obligations in each country/territory, and horizontal analysis of common issues between countries/territory, preparation and dissemination of questionnaire leading to a cooperation framework to support possible future actions on local/regional level.
- Assuring partnerships on local and regional level, providing the cities/towns stakeholders as well as wider public the possibility to participate in the document development.
- On the best available knowledge basis across community policies.
- A transparent, interactive "on line" process, any interested or concerned party can follow and take part in the process of the project implementation through the forum which will be opened on the RENCO website <http://www.renco-project.org/>
- Gender equality, multicultural/multiethnic representation and minority participation as postulates of rights-based approach are achieved already within the participating CSOs and will be promoted in the selection of different stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The RENCO Committee with local experts will be established in each country / territory. It will form the basis for the active participation and qualitative contribution (review on questionnaire and core issues) of the chosen key players through leadership of the Ad - hoc Expert Committee.

4.4. Stakeholders

Stakeholders, directly involved (*direct stakeholders*) in project (by written commitment) are "natural allies" to urban sustainable development: municipalities, and local governments (from each of six countries/territory covered by project). They are related to problems addressed in the project in the way that it covers the specific problems they face in their everyday activities as well as strategic planning. *Direct stakeholders* are the driving force of the planned activity having participatory approach, contributing to the outreach of the project, as well as by addressing the main tracks for project follow-up.

The project is mobilising *other stakeholders* too, like other regional CSOs, other municipal governments, national institutions, academia, etc. *Other stakeholders* are planned to be involved in relevant activities throughout the project duration (like National Institute of Standardisation, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities in Serbia and University, in assessment, research, and analyses, by supporting consultants work; CSOs in networking, partnership and capacity building activities). All of them will benefit through participation, in order to contribute to the better living conditions of all citizens. In the region, stakeholders include initially: Municipal Government of town of Bitola, Center for Development of Durmitor Mountains and Municipal Government of Zabljak, Municipality of Jablanica, Municipality of Liqenas, Municipality office of Orahovac and Agriculture Cooperative Agroocop.

4.5. Expected outputs and results

Proposed activities that will be taken during the course of the project implementation are realistically expected to lead towards the list of core (priority) urban sustainability issues in the region (min 5 core issues). The participatory process is of crucial importance and a key for the final output of the project, regional final assessment report "Regional Environmental Cohesion: Towards the SEE Urban Sustainable Development strategy" and its inclusion as a reference for the future decisions on policies and investments. The extent to which the project achieves the expected outcome will be primarily indicated by the number of requests for printed versions of the final report and/or its Internet downloads (No. of requests for printed version (60 in absolute No)). The omnipresent regional CSO cooperation and partnership was promoted on the side event of "Environment for Europe Conference 2007", Belgrade. The level of the established CSO regional cooperation with its potential to last and develop after the end of this project is indicated by the number of CSOs interested to participate on the side event as well as the new memberships in the Forum EfE (SEE Regional NGOs Network). The final dissemination of the information on the outreach document will be achieved by press releases and/or events throughout the region and

sending them to different stakeholders, followed by its inclusion in the other thematic information dissemination tools (newspaper articles, internet sites).

The results of the project are expected to directly contribute in harmonizing economic growth with the increasing pressures on the environment and to sustainable development outreach by relying on its core indicators as the basis for analysis (in each country / territory and horizontally through the region). Proper information on the project activities and outputs, assured partnerships with cities/towns (providing them opportunity to participate in the document development) and established long-lasting CSO regional network will help urban sustainability issues achieve more attention of citizens and decision makers and thus to be included and ranked among priorities in the strategies and policies.

5. CONCLUDED REMARKS

Sustainable urban development is first and foremost a legacy issue. Many activities, problems, and solutions in the field of sustainability are interconnected.

This project, “Regional Environmental Cohesion: Towards SEE Urban Sustainable Development Strategy”, can be seen as the powerful tool for lobbying for the positive law regulations and implementation of the European standards on local/regional level as it deals with the problems which are on the very beginning of the urban sustainability chain and, thus, having great potential for follow-up activities.

Having in mind that the participatory process is of crucial importance and a key for the final output of the project, with presenting this project frame to research community, the comments, interest and follow-up contribution of experts will add value.

Cohesion, effective networking between regional civil society organizations and exchange of knowledge and experiences on urban issues, which will be presented as the output of this project, have capacity for development of SEE regional framework for Sustainable Urban Development Strategy with the possibility to further develop SEE Convention on Urban Sustainable Development as well as Terms of References for specific investment projects and could initiate replication trend as the framework for development of projects dealing with different issues related to environmental issues of sustainable development of the region (already came up as the outcome of the preparatory meeting of the regional CSOs related to this project).

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