

GREEN NEWS FROM THE REGION

Legislative changes, challenges and developments from each of the Western Balkan countries and Turkey particularly focusing on Air Quality, Waste Management, and climate change. *Read more on p. 1-6.*



EARTH DAY 2018

This year's Earth Day focus is on ending plastic pollution, by providing the information and inspiration needed to fundamentally change people's attitude and behavior about plastic. *Read more on p. 7.*



LONGTERM HAZARD OR BENEFIT?

The granting of about 80 licenses in 2015 in FYR of Macedonia for geological explorations raised the question of whether and how much the opening of such mines is dangerous for the environment, the people's health and their communities. *Read more on p. 8.*

Key Developments from the Western Balkan and Turkey

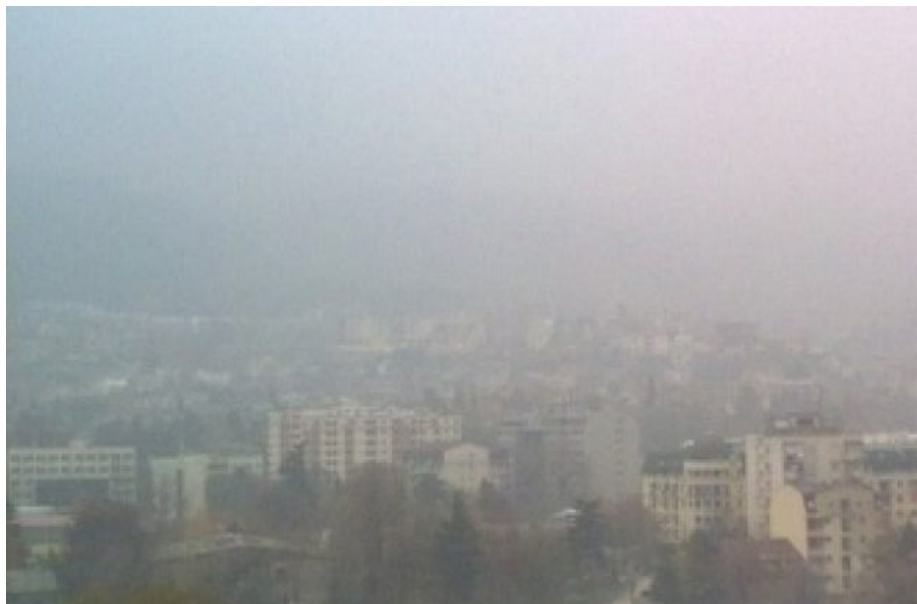
From legislative changes to local challenges and initiatives, following is a summary of the current state of developments in the field of environment from the Western Balkans and Turkey.

Republic of Macedonia

Law for Amending of the Law on Ambient Air Quality

The Law on Ambient Air Quality (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 67/04) was prepared and adopted in 2004 in accordance with the Air Framework Directive 1996/62 / EC and the relevant directives. In the years to follow, the law was subjected to amendments (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 92/07, 83/09, 35/10, 47/11, 163/13) aiming at harmonising domestic laws with EU air legislation, and in particular with the Clean Air Directive in Europe (CAFE Directive) which was adopted by the European Parliament in 2008. The Law on Ambient Air Quality provides a legal basis for regulating: *Types of sources of pollution; Unique border, target values, information thresholds and alerts; Management of ambient air quality; Assessment of ambient air quality; Planning the protection of the ambient air quality; Monitoring of quality of ambient air and emission sources; Information system; Protection against ambient air pollution; Supervision and competent bodies.*

In that direction, in the period from 2005 up to date, over 15 by-laws have been prepared referring to monitoring, control, assessment, reporting and



Source: telegraf.com/scoopje

protection of air quality.

In almost all of the European Commission's Country Reports, progress rating with regards to the air quality chapter, ranges from "some" to "only limited".

In analyzing the situation of air quality management in the Republic of Macedonia, the following problems were identified:

- The current way of preparing air quality plans at the level of a zone/agglomeration creates difficulties because the local self-government units do not have *sufficient administrative capacity for mutual coordination* and the zoning includes a larger number of municipalities with different problems and sources of air pollution;

- The manner of adopting planning documents at the level of units of local self-government and their verification and approval by the central government are not clearly specified;

- The prescribed short-term measures in the local short-term action plans, as well as the short-term measures proposed by the Intersectoral Working Group and adopted by the Government, are being implemented with difficulty;

- Partial control of the implementation of the defined short-term measures by the relevant inspection services;

- Insufficient number of state environmental inspectors and authorized environmental inspectors performing control over the



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implementation of short-term measures implemented under conditions of alarming air pollution.

In that perspective, The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MoEPP) has begun with drafting a Law for Amending the Law on Ambient Air Quality.

The main purpose of this amendment is the establishment of a simple procedure for the preparation of air quality plans and short-term action plans as well as efficient implementation of air quality improvement measures.

For a smoother implementation of the legal provisions, it is necessary that they ensure:

- Clarification of the competencies and procedures for the preparation and adoption of air quality plans and short-term action plans in accordance with the recommendations contained in the Program for Reform of Local Self-Government Units in the field of environment (adopted by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia in December 2017) in the framework of the project "Strengthening the capacities for implementation of the environmental legislation at the local level", (EuropeAid / 134079 / D / SER / MK).

- The amendments and supplements to the Law should enable clear definition of the competences for preparation and adoption of air quality plans and short-term action plans at the local level, in accordance with two cumulative criteria – Exceeding the alert threshold values and population numbers;

- Determination of the competence of the Government to implement certain short-term measures to improve air quality when exceeding the alert threshold.

- Authorization of other state inspectorates and local inspectors to supervise implementation of short-term measures for improving the air quality. The timeframe for drafting of the Law is February - April 2018. Parallel to the drafting of the Law, a Report on the Regulation Impact Assessment (RIA) will be prepared.

In the preparation of the draft law, the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, in addition to the state administration bodies (Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Local Self-Government, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Information Society and Administration; the Vice President of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia responsible for economic affairs; the Secretariat for European Affairs;) and local self-government units (80 municipalities, the City of Skopje and the Association of Local Self-Government Units), anticipate the involvement of the Economic Chambers (Economic Chamber of Macedonia,

Union of Economic Chambers, Economic Chamber of North-western Macedonia) and non-governmental organizations active in the field of environmental protection.

The contribution of the public concerned is planned through the holding of working meetings after the submitted remarks. The text of the amendments to the law will be compulsorily reviewed by the Intersectoral Working Group on Air in which representatives from the non-governmental sector are members.

The stakeholders will be able to give their opinions, remarks and suggestions on the draft law and the Draft RIA Report directly to the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, through the ENER system.

Therefore ENV.net team from Macedonia will closely monitor the progress of the whole process.

International conference: European experiences on the role of companies that manage special waste streams - now and in the future

On March 13, 2018, the International Conference "European experiences on the role of companies that manage special waste streams - now and in the future" was held in Skopje, organized by the Association for management of special waste streams at the Chamber of Commerce of Macedonia.

The purpose of this conference was to present the activities undertaken so far, but also the future activities that would contribute to the advancement of the process of collective management of special waste streams, such as packaging waste, electronic and electrical waste, waste batteries and accumulators.

The conference was also attended by the Deputy Minister of Environment and Physical Planning, Mr. Jani Makraduli. He pointed out that waste management is of public interest and that its

treatment in a different way represents a benefit, not an expense, and that the path to the circular economy does not mean only environmental protection, but a better and more efficient economic growth.

At the conference, it was announced that the laws currently in preparation will regulate this area, with greater and more comprehensive support for collective operators, and will also actively stimulate recycling.

At the Conference, presentations were given by the President of the Association, Mr. Filip Ivanovski, Mr. Zoran Sapuric, Minister without Portfolio in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia in charge of Regulation for Improvement of the Investment Climate for the Domestic Enterprises, the Vice President of Association of Unities of Self-Government, Mr. Visar Ganiu, as well as guests from Bulgaria (Ecopak), Czech Republic (EcoCom) and Germany (Pro-Europe Duales System Deutschland GmbH & Pro Europe), who shared their experiences on the way the waste management system operates in their countries.

Representatives of 4x4x4 Balkan Bridges, members of the Env.net team from Macedonia were invited and participated in the conference. They took this opportunity to announce the start of the third phase of the Env.net project, and at the same time to have direct contacts (and to schedule appointments) with other relevant actors (representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, representatives from the authorized waste recovery organisations from Macedonia and the region, the NGO sector - Regional Center for Environment - REC, and other associations) working on the issues of environment protection, waste, and circular economy.



International conference: European experiences on the role of companies that manage special waste streams - now and in the future, Chamber of Commerce, 13th March, 2018 Skopje, source: 4x4x4 Balkan Bridges

Turkey

Recent developments regarding the EIA implementation in Turkey.

Turkey's long standing environmental conflict between the state and the civil society regarding the plans for building a Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) in Akkuyu, a small bay by the Mediterranean coast, is still a hot topic in the country. Recent developments regarding the EIA report brought the issue back again into the country's agenda. On November 22nd, 2017, 13 separate court cases were filed against the positive EIA report of the NPP, on the grounds that the report lacks certain crucial information regarding several important issues, such as waste

plant in the fertile lands of the Alpu Plain in Eskişehir province. It took the consulting firm and the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation only 177 days to research, investigate, consult the public, finalize the report and give a positive decision. It is clear that such a short period is not enough to conduct field research on meteorological and climate characteristics and potential impacts on the agricultural land, forest areas, and water resources. The local and national civil society, already highly mobilised against the thermal power plant since the plans were announced, announced that they will bring this positive EIA report to the court. These two new cases show once

both in terms of legislation and the enforcement of the legislative text.

Panel on the Economics of Climate Change Mitigation Policies in Turkey:

A new book by Sevil Acar, Ebru Voyvoda and Erinc Yeldan titled *"Macroeconomics of Climate Change in a dualistic Economy"* was launched on 20th of March 2018 in Istanbul Policy Center in Karaköy, followed by a fruitful panel and discussion regarding the economics of the climate change mitigation policies in Turkey. The book investigates the tension between the green growth and global efforts against the climate change, by using Turkey as its primary example. The authors present methods to model and assess policy instruments for mitigating climate change, offer a path for those seeking an applied economic research framework to study economic considerations.

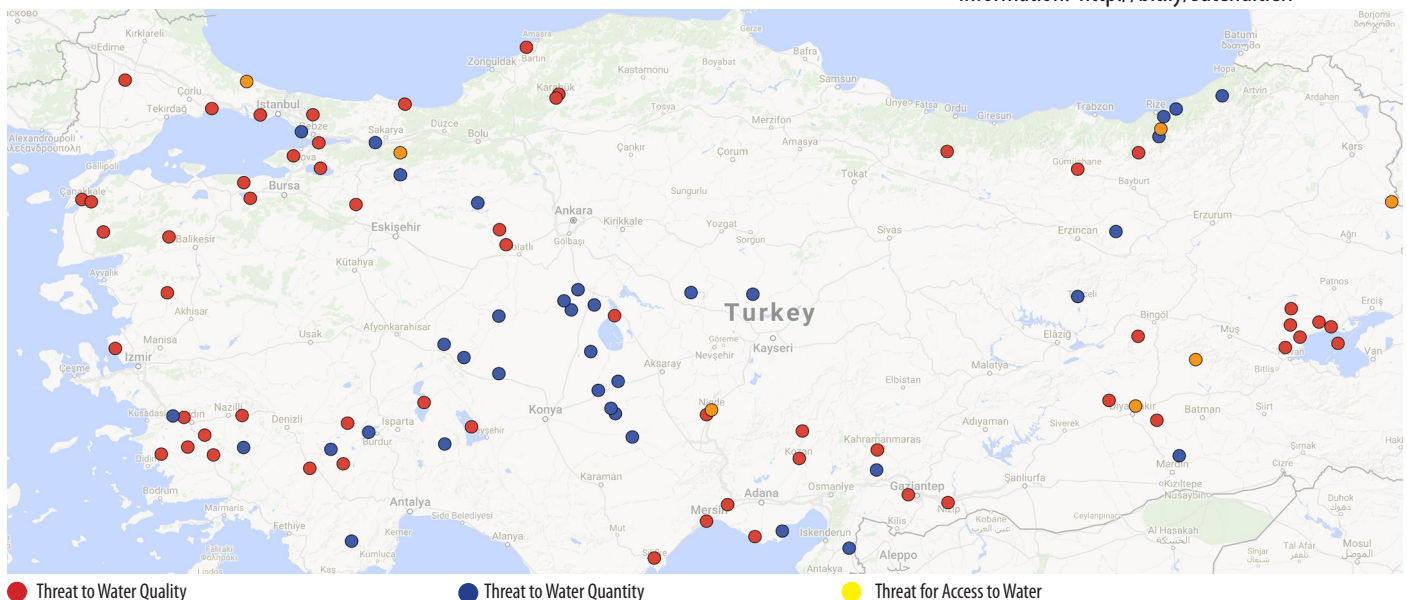
TEMA republished the Map of "Threats to Water Resources in Turkey" for the 22 March World Water day

TEMA Foundation published "The Map of Threats to Water Resources in Turkey" that was prepared with the contributions of its volunteer representatives, on the World Water Day in 2016 and updated in 2017. The issues and problems with water resources in Turkey were identified with the help of an online form, ensuring a systematic information flow from the volunteer representatives in 81 cities. Threats to water resources are examined under following three categories: threats to quality of water, threats to quantity of water and threats to access to water. With the launch of the third phase of ENV.Net, TEMA Foundation updated the map once again in 2018. The map now contains a total of 100 different cases related to the issues with water resources from 50 different provinces. The map is a living instrument and TEMA has called on citizens continue updating the map with recent information. <http://bit.ly/sutehditleri>



management, earthquake risks, marine life, to name a few. However, on March 7th 2018, the Council of State rejected all 13 court cases and decided to proceed with the process based on the current report. Even though the Council itself admitted that the EIA report lacks several elements, they still decided that these omissions are not of great importance and do not decimate the EIA report. Civil society and activists, state that they will contest the decision and prepare to bring this decision to the appeal court, in the following days. Around the same time, another positive EIA decision came to surface regarding the Alpu Thermal Power Plant, a planned coal fired power

again that even though there is a well-established and sufficient legislation Turkey (in line with the European Union) regarding the environmental protection, this legislative text does not translate well into implementation. This implementation problem is also cited several times in the EU progress reports. For instance, the 2016 progress report points out that Turkey should "ensure correct implementation of the environmental impact assessment legislation". The same issue is quoted in the 2015 progress report as "... poor implementation of court rulings on environmental issues". This shows that the country still has a long way to go in terms of reaching a good environmental protection level,



Albania

Flooding in the Northern region

Meteorological conditions during March in Albania prevailed with high precipitation, mostly in the northern region. Shkodra in particular, faced persistent rainfall that caused flooding of more than 4,945 hectares of land, and 400 houses. Damage caused by the floods and wind storms affected the most, residents living near the river banks and the villages between the coast and Drini river, as well as the city of Shkodra itself. Authorities and Military Service set up 5000 sandbags to strengthen the embankments.

Floods in this area are a recurring phenomenon, often more than once a year, owing mainly to the management of Drini River Cascade and Buna River. The region of Shkodra is flooded often two to three times a year, though not normally to such extreme levels.

Similarly, other regions in the country were also affected by floods, including the Municipality of Durrës, the situation was made worse due to a problem with the city's main sewage pipeline. In such cases, people in these areas are affected also by the lack of power and water supply.

Guidelines for the Development of the Noise Action Plans

Following the approval of the law on Environmental Noise Pollution in Albania, the Ministry of Tourism and Environment approved earlier this February (2018) the guideline No.1, date 19.02.2018 "For approval of minimum requirements for developing the noise action plan". The aim of this guideline is to provide measures, activities and targets to be met by local governments in compliance with the law on administration of noise pollution. In order for the local governments to be able to implement the law, they will need to first analyze their current situation on noise protection, community and business concerns, and any best practices locally.

The key objectives of the guideline include: (1) identification and evaluation of sources that generate noise and cause acoustic pollution; (2) impact assessment of each source on acoustic pollution, with the purpose of devising the necessary measures for the reduction or elimination of environmental noise pollution; (3) analysis of the international, national and local legal framework on the responsibilities of central and local government, as well as economic operators, for compliance with legal requirements related to environmental noise management, etc.

The guideline also foresees the consideration of EU and national policies regarding noise and adaptation of action plans to the fulfillment of



Floods in Albania, March 2018. Source: <http://www.javanews.al/>

these policies. The object of the noise pollution management plans, whose drafting lies with local governments, are: social and cultural service activities (nightclubs, bars, restaurants, discos), noise generated by the transport sector and economic activity using noise-generating equipment and machines, such as saws, electric motors, generators, pneumatic hammers etc. As indicated by the legal framework, the drafting of the action plans foresees public consultation by the end of the year.

Montenegro

Revision of National Waste Management Plan and Law on Waste Management

The Ministry of Tourism and Sustainable Development has established a working group for the revision of the National Waste Management Plan 2015 – 2020, in addition to the previously formed working group for the preparation of the draft of law on waste management. The latter constitutes a major concern for Montenegro, particularly so when it comes to the lack of a final decision on the choice of waste management options. The local governments are limited in devising long – term adequate solutions for waste management, and current local plans fail to offer any quality solutions.

The basic principles of waste management defined in the Montenegrin Waste Management Strategy until 2030 and National Waste Management Plan in Montenegro for the period 2015 – 2020 are enforced. A vast number of local communities dispose waste on temporary illegal dumpsites – about 350 according to the Nature and Environmental Protection Agency, which ought to have been closed.

Hydropower Plants in Montenegro

The Government of Montenegro plans to

award concessions for the construction of small hydropower plants. Such concessions are for the design, construction, exploitation, and maintenance of small hydropower plants on the following rivers: Bukovica, Bijela, Bistrica, Kraštica, Velička Rijeka, Đurička, Kaludarska, and Vrbnica. The duration of the concession is set for all water courses for 30 years. Investors are faced with considerable resistance from the local communities, especially in the case of river Bukovica. A public debate was held in February 2018, on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the two planned hydropowers on river Bukovica (municipality of Šavnik). Green Home participated and provided comments on the EIA.

NOTE: According to the law on water, there is an obligation for developing a cadastre of watercourses with environmental and energy characteristics. In the phase of concession issuing, the cadastre, which is one of the main bases for sustainable planning of small hydropower plants, did not exist. Such water is classified as drinking water (A1) and habits of brook trout. The local communities around the Bukovica river have established a network, and formed the Ecological movement "Donja Bukovica". Together with the support of Green Home and Coalition 27, they are working on the mobilisation of locals as they do not want a hydropower in their village.

To this end, a round-table was organised on March 16, bringing together representatives of institutions, academics, NGOs, local communities as well as investors.

World Forest Day on March 21, 2018

Montenegrin forests are under pressure, such as fires, illegal logging and unsustainable forest management. Until now, Forest Management relies on the Forest Concession System, which does not represent a sustainable management. On

World Forest Day, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Green Home, Zeleni Crne Gore etc., organized a meeting to discuss on the forest situation in Montenegro, during which the Ministry announced the future reorganization of forest management.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On a Regional level

In the previous period the document "A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans" was issued. The main six priorities are: Strengthened support to the rule of law; Reinforcing engagement on security and migration; Supporting socio-economic development; Increasing transport and energy connectivity; Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans; Supporting reconciliation and good neighbourly relations. Specific priority for the environmental protection is not defined, which will significantly influence negatively for Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the recently published Environmental Performance Index, Bosnia and Herzegovina is ranked as 158th out of 180 countries rated and is certainly the worst rated country in Europe. According to the World Health Organization data, BiH takes second place in the world, at the rate of mortality from diseases caused by polluted air. Bosnia and Herzegovina needs projects that have great importance – projects that would support initiatives in climate change actions, flood recoveries and environmental approach to support better health conditions.

Regarding the laws and policies related to environment, in Federation of BiH, the new updated version of Law for environmental protection is still not adopted. In Republika Srpska, the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Civil Engineering and Ecology is

regularly revising and issuing permissions for small hydropower plants. HE plants are putting in danger river flora and fauna and in this manner endanger the environment.

On a country level

There are higher number of permits issued for small hydropower plants, which represent current and constant environmental problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Specifically, at the beginning of March, Hydropower plant Medna was put into operation. HE Medna is on Sana River. Large number of NGOs (23 from 8 cities) and individuals/citizens were joint into Coalition for Sana that was fighting for protection of Sana River, for almost ten years. Coalition constantly stressed facts regarding the nature protection, health, and economic losses – which was confirmed by the Economic Study and also pointing the irregularities regarding the planning and construction of HE Medna. The coalition will continue to monitor HE Medna, in order to have insight into the environmental impact, and to react in due time the protection of Sana springs.

Serbia

In preparation of the negotiation position for Chapter 27 - In the framework of the EU accession process related Chapter 27, the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia organized a series of meetings and activities in order to develop the *negotiating position*. The meetings focused on the fourth review of the *Draft Negotiating Position* for Chapter 27 and *Draft Directive Specific Implementation Plans* (DSIP) for a number of directives, identifying directives that require additional clarification, and planning of next steps. Further, meetings of Sector Working

Groups of Negotiation Working Group 27, meetings of DSIPs working groups for drafting the negotiating positions for Chapter 27 in certain (sub) sectors, were held during March:

- Sector working group for *Water Management* met on March 2nd, 2018; it is expected that the draft of specific plans for the implementation of the directives in this area are finalised within March, and summary will be included in the text of the negotiating positions for Chapter 27.

- The meetings of Sector Working Groups for Waste Management and Chemicals was held on March 5th. The current situation and planning of future activities have been discussed, as well as additional measures regarding information and data necessary for negotiating position. Sector working group on chemicals emphasized the new regulation on the mercury, that came into force in January 2018.

- Sector working group for climate change met on March 7th, 2018 to discuss the draft for negotiating position for Chapter 27.

- Sector working groups on air quality, noise protection and civil protection held their meetings on March 6th, 2018. Negotiating position for the sector of noise and civil protection is in the final stage.

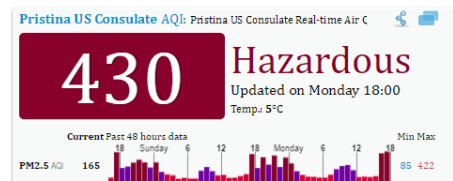
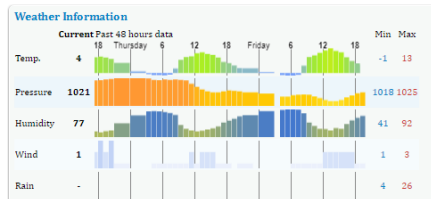
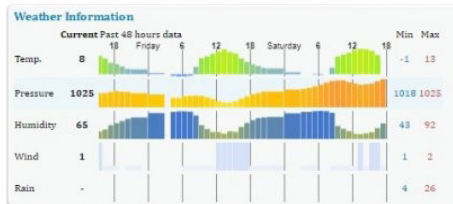
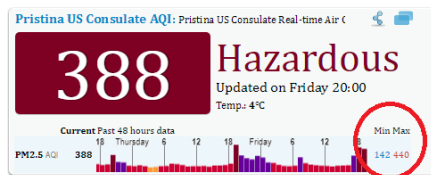
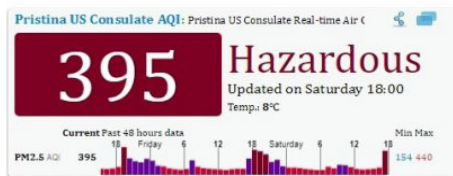
- Sectors working groups for DSIPs, under the umbrella of further implementation of Environmental Approximation Strategy, were: on March 6th for DSIP on Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive, on March 6th for DSIPs on Batteries and Accumulators and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directives, on March 7th on DSIP on Waste Framework Directive, on March 20th on DSIP on Water Framework Directive, on March 20th on DSIP of Nitrates Directive, on March 21st on DSIP on Drinking Water Directive.

- Number of relevant Consultative and Working meetings (like Meeting of Serbian government Core Team for negotiations with the EU, meetings between Members of the Serbian government Core team for negotiations with the EU responsible for Chapter 27 and President of Negotiation Group 27, as well as between the President of Negotiation Group 27 and Heads of Sector working groups of Negotiation Working Group 27 and interested stakeholders).

All meetings mentioned above served to revise the draft text of the Negotiating Position and also to determine the issues for technical consultations with the European Commission, as well as members of the Negotiating Team.



Source: Green Home NGO, Montenegro.



Air Pollution in Kosovo. Source: <http://aqicn.org/city/kosovo/pristina/us-consulate/>

Kosovo

On March 15th Kosovo Assembly voted the Annual Report - State of the Environment in Kosovo for 2016. The report is under obligation of Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency, proposed by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning.

The drafting of the Report on the State of Environment in Kosovo is based on the Environmental Protection Law¹. Pursuant to Article 25 of this Law, the Government of Kosovo, upon the proposal of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, submits to the Assembly the Report on the State of the Environment. The report should include data on: • the state of the environment and changes in the environment compared to the previous report, • the environmental impacts on health by the population, • the implementation of the environmental strategy and the action plan, measures taken to protect the environment, • the development of environmental institutions and • the financing of the environmental protection system.

In accordance with the duties and responsibilities of governmental institutions, the Kosovo Agency

for Environmental Protection is the institution that drafts this document. This Annual Report presents the state of the environment for 2016, but also previous data occupy a considerable place for comparison purposes. For drafting the report, AMKK has collected environmental data from monitoring institutions, companies, operators, various companies, publications, reports and from other sources. The collected data are processed on qualitative environmental information that is now presented in this report. These data are in text, charts, maps, and graphical form.

Presentation of the situation for some environmental sectors is less covered due to lack of data, lack of monitoring, insufficient legal basis or other institutional and management weaknesses. The quality of this report, to some extent, is a reflection of the monitoring quality that is implemented at national level and the level of organization of the environmental information system. These two environmental systems are still in the up-grading and organization stage, and there is still lack of complete and reliable data.

Air Quality Situation

Kosovo, more specifically Prishtina has been facing air pollution during this winter. Air quality is monitored through a system of automatic measurements, meaning that continual measurements are made, without interruption. The monitored parameters are: Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂), Ozone (O₃), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and the suspended particles in the air PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}. The collected results by automatic parameter measurements of the air pollutants are processed, validated and analyzed in giving an assessment of the state of air quality in the monitoring area. The assessment of the state of air quality is done by comparing the values of the results obtained with standard values, also stated in the local laws and regulations in force and according to 2008/50 EC directives for Clean Air in Europe.

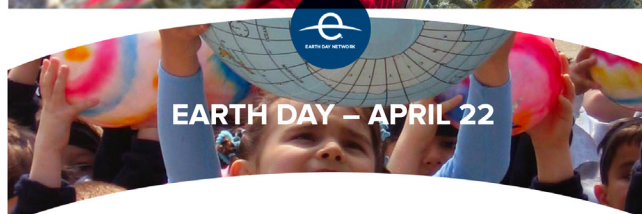
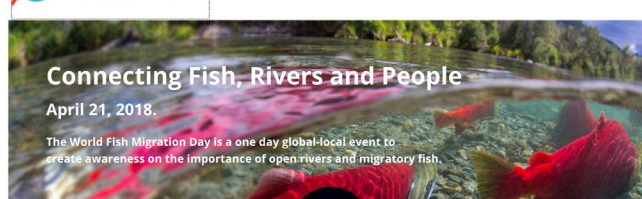
The analysed results obtained from the automatic monitoring of the air quality have been found during the monitoring period of November – December 2016 and January 2017, which exceed the daily limit values of PM₁₀. The permitted daily limit value for human health protection is 50µg/m³. Whereas, regarding the exceeding days, up to 35 days are allowed in PM₁₀ exceeding. Throughout these months, 46 days (cases) have been registered as exceeding limit values of PM₁₀. In November there were 10 days (cases), in December 21 days (cases), and in January 15 days (cases). The maximum value registered is 254.9µg/m³, on the 29th of January, 2017.

Due to the above mentioned situation, Kosovo Assembly after long debate approved the Resolution on air pollution.

Link for Report - State of the Environment in Kosovo
http://ammk-rks.net/repository/docs/Raporti_vjetor_per_gjendjen_e_mjedisit__2016_shq_-_pa_shtojca.pdf

Link for Report - Air Pollution
http://www.ammk-rks.net/repository/docs/Report_on_air_quality_november_january.pdf

Green Dates



Key Facts About Earth Day

1970

● Earth Day Was Founded by Gaylord Nelson



Photo: Alex Wong / Getty Images
Info: www.thoughtco.com

USA celebrates an environmental teach-in first held on April 22, 1970 known as Earth Day, thanks to senator Gaylord Nelson. The initial aim of this initiative was to educate the public about environmental issues.

1969

● The First Earth Day Was Inspired by an Oil Spill



Photo: Alex Wong / Getty Images
Info: www.thoughtco.com

1969 - Earth Day was inspired by Santa Barbara oil spill. As a reaction to this natural disaster, activists were mobilized to create environmental regulation, environmental education, and Earth Day. This day involved classes and projects that would help the public understand what they could do to protect the environment.

1970

● More Than 20 Million People Took Part in the First Earth Day celebration



Photo: Earth Day 1970, America.gov
Info: www.thoughtco.com

1970 - The first Earth Day celebrations brought together 20 million Americans out for peaceful demonstrations, in favor of environmental reform.

1990

● Earth Day Went Global in 1990



Photo: Windemere Leadership program
Info: www.thoughtco.com

1990 - Mobilizing 200 million people in 141 countries, Earth Day activities lifted the status of environmental issues onto the world stage. Unlike the first Earth Day in 1970, this 20th Anniversary was waged with stronger marketing tools, greater access to television and radio.

2000

● In 2000, Earth Day Focused on Climate Change



Photo: Chase Dekker Wild-Life Images / Getty Images
Info: www.thoughtco.com

2000 - Earth Day combined the ambitious spirit of the first Earth Day with the international grassroots activism of Earth Day 1990. The focus was climate change. The event ultimately enlisted more than 5,000 environmental groups outside the United States, reaching hundreds of millions of people in a record 183 countries and about 400,000 participants stood in the cold rain during the course of the day.

2018

● Earth Day 2018: End Plastic Pollution



Photo: Getty Images
Info: www.thoughtco.com

2018 – On April 22 we should come together to help end plastic pollution. Plastic is threatening our planet's survival, from poisoning and injuring marine life to disrupting human hormones, from littering our beaches and landscapes to clogging our streams and landfills.

Opening of the new gold mines in the South-Eastern part of Macedonia: **LONG-TERM HAZARD OR BENEFIT?!**

The South-Eastern region is one of the eight statistical and planning regions of Macedonia. This region is bordered by the Vardar and Eastern regions. The region covers the Strumica-Radovish and Gevgelija-Valandovo valleys, in the drainage basin of the Strumica River and the lower drainage basin of the river Vardar. The South-Eastern region is characterized by long hot summers (with an annual average of 230 sunny days), which in turn is a good prerequisite for agricultural development. The South-Eastern region has a land area of 120,583 ha with a total arable land of 56,907 ha. The agricultural area in the South-Eastern region is 9.5% of the total agricultural area in the Republic of Macedonia.

The debate on the opening of gold mines in the South-Eastern part of Macedonia gained the public interest in the last two or three years. The granting of about 80 licenses in 2015 for geological explorations raised the question of whether and how much the opening of such mines is dangerous for the environment, the people's health and their communities.

The alarm about the possible consequences from these geological explorations that would then easily pass into concessions for mining of mineral resources was initially raised by the civic activists and self-organized citizen groups from Gevgelija, Bogdanci, and Valandovo, followed by reactions of the citizens from the other affected municipalities (Dojran, Novo Selo, Bosilovo, Strumica). At the beginning of last year (2017), the media, especially the national televisions (Telma, 24 Vesti), played a positive role for greater national visibility of the problem. The wave of referenda, through which the citizens of the affected municipalities requested that the opening of the mines be stopped, began with the referendum in Gevgelija (April 23, 2017, successful), followed by the referenda in Bogdanci (successful), Dojran (successful), Valandovo (not successful), Novo Selo, Bosilovo etc. The pressure on the citizens, aimed at impeding the processes, was evident through



municipal councils delays for approval of the referenda, politics, and business motivated groups using various forms of pressure and threats. The hardest was in Valandovo.

But this was just the beginning. Self-organized citizen groups supported by a number of environmental

associations, through field campaigns, protests, and referendum declaration, stated a clear "NO" for the opening of mines and environmental pollution. However, given that the referendum is not a legally binding instrument, the struggle of the citizens of the South-Eastern region continues.

Simona Getova, activist and one of the initiators of SOS Valandovo

"Continuously denouncing mining projects that stem from a rotten neoliberal agenda that doesn't take human rights into account, putting pressure on and holding decision-makers accountable for their actions, as well as discussing community-led alternatives, are all activities without which the halting of extractive projects in Macedonia cannot happen. Any actual progress made by governmental authorities will only be the result of the local communities' insistent efforts. In these times of political, social, and economic turmoil globally, practicing solidarity across communities, across countries, and uniting struggles nationally to loudly manifest people power, will be crucial to achieving the liberation of the affected communities." (<http://www.criticatrac.ro/lefteast/miners-macedonia/>)

Protest organised by SOS Valandovo, 8 December 2017. Source: Facebook SOS Valandovo, Photo-archive.



Draft Law Amendment on Mineral Resources as a Ticket for Salvation

In December 2017, a group of MPs from the ruling majority submitted a Draft Law Amendment on Mineral Resources, with the aim to prohibit the exploitation and processing of mineral raw materials by applying cyanide, sulphuric acid, and other dangerous substances.

As explained in the justification of the proposed law, the immediate motivation for the proposed law is the issued concessions for open cut mining of copper and gold for the mines in Kazandol in Valandovo and Ilovica in Bosilovo, which in their extraction procedures will use sulphuric acid and cyanide solution in huge quantities. Knowing the danger these chemicals pose to the living organisms, a wave of protests throughout the country has been stirred over the past two years, and referendums have been organized to stop the mines in six municipalities. But there is a potential danger from another 80 already issued concessions for geological explorations, after which the same

requirements for obtaining a concession for mining of mineral resources can be expected.

The proposed Law is to be adopted in a shortened procedure. However, given that the Ministry of Economy recommend its rejection, the fate of this draft law is uncertain.

Public Hearing on the Draft Law Amendment on Mineral Resources

Concerning the submitted Draft Amendments to the Law on Mineral Resources, on February 1, 2018, a Public Hearing was held in the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, where representatives of the proponents, the mining business sector, academic community, representatives of civil associations and citizens from the affected municipalities from the Southeast region, presented their positions. The atmosphere at the hearing was stormy. Each of the parties concerned, offered arguments in favour of their views: FOR (or AGAINST) the amending of the law – (FOR or) AGAINST the opening of the mines.

Arguments “For” and “Against”

The business community of the mining sector is against the amendment of the Law on Mineral Resources. The arguments are that mining standards today are much higher than those 40 years ago, with strict legal and control mechanisms that prevent possible unintended consequences. In addition, they argue that the mining sector is an important exporter in the country. Metal mines export around \$ 180 million annually and have imports of 80 to 90 million dollars, indicating that it is a sector that is positively export-oriented. According to them, if the changes to the law are adopted, there is a danger of closing down of the existing mines and losing jobs.

Proponents of the law explain that the proposed changes do not apply to the existing mines, but to those that are yet to be open. The purpose of the amendments is to prohibit the use of cyanide, sulphuric acid and other hazardous substances in mining, to protect the environment, the health of employees and the local population.

On the other hand, the representatives of the citizens from the affected areas support the proposed changes, hoping that this will save them from the mines that are to become a brute reality in their local communities. They point out that the problem is that open-pit mines will be open and a process of leaching applied to ore-mining metals will be used. Their arguments are that there are no such mines in Europe, and on other continents, there are in uninhabited areas such as the desert in Australia, Nevada in America, Peru, Chile, Indonesia, Africa, Kirghizstan, and Siberia.

The explanation of the draft law states that it is very likely, the cheapest and most dangerous mining

Angel Nakov, Civic initiative SOS Gevgelija

“In the long run, the forest fund will be destroyed, the soil will be contaminated, and fresh waters will be polluted because chemicals that are dangerous to the environment will be used in the process of mineral (gold) extracting. Kozuf will not be the same, with its famous tourist sites; Gevgelija will lose its lungs. Open cut mining above the villages of Moin and Konsko at almost 3000 hectares will mean a destruction of nature, tourism, and agriculture in Gevgelija. As simple as that!”

exploitation techniques will be used, considering that the research relates mainly to poor gold, silver and copper ores.

That would mean that about 10,000 square kilometres of our country, which is 25,000 square kilometres in total, will be devastated from surface mines. That will completely change the appearance of the land and will pollute the waters, the air, and the soil. And not to forget, most of the population in the South-Eastern region rely on agriculture and tourism. That will also be destroyed. For several hundred jobs in the mines, only 2% profit will go to the municipalities, and 98% profit for the concessionaires.

The expert community has a divided opinion. Some believe that the opening of mines will cause a mass emigration from certain areas; others warn that closing of the mines means migration of the population that is now working in the mining industry.

According to university professor Blagoj Golomeov, “the European Commission, in 2010, rejected the general ban on the use of cyanides, because no in-depth analysis found any argument of considerations for the environmental or human health. It is true that the Czech Republic, Germany, and Romania have a ban, but it applies strictly to using cyanide leaching solution in the open”.

Environmental CSOs support the proposed amendment of the Law on Mineral Resources because they are aimed at protecting the environment and the health and life of people (both of which are natural rights protected by the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia). They propose an additional amendment to the text of the draft law, which stipulates a referendum as a condition that must be fulfilled in the procedure for granting a concession for exploitation of mineral ores at the request of any interested party. The Draft Law for Amending the Law on Mineral Resources was at the agenda of the 32nd Session of the Parliament, which took place on March 14, 2018, but due to other priorities, this discussion was postponed with the explanation that “this draft law will be considered as soon as working opportunities are created”

The Growing Pressure is Showing Results

At the end of 2017 and early 2018, more in-live debates were held on the national televisions, where the mayors of the affected municipalities, representatives of the mining sector, the academic community and citizens from the immediately affected areas were given a possibility to confront their arguments. The position of the local authorities is decisive - they stand together with their citizens in defence of the demands not to allow the opening of the mines.

The national government finely decided to act in the best interest of its citizens, respecting their choice: people's health and well-being, and clean environment are before the profit. At the session held on March 13, 2018, the Government instructed its Ministry of Economy to prepare information on the fulfilment of the conditions for termination of the Concession Agreement for the exploitation of mineral resources, copper, gold and silver, on the locality of “Kazandol”, which covers the municipalities of Valandovo, Bogdanci and Dojran, and for revoking the license for exploitation of mineral resources granted on June 20, 2015. In the next session held on March 20, 2018, it was concluded that it is necessary to complete the full documentation and argumentation until the next government session, in order to implement the procedure for termination of the agreement with the concessionaire of the Kazandol mine. Finally, on March 27, 2018, the Government made a decision to unilaterally terminate the contract with SARDIC MTS DOOEL Skopje, the company that operates the Kazandol mining complex.

Yet, the question “Your Mines or Our Lives in the South-Eastern part of Macedonia” still remains open, awaiting its epilogue.

Citizens and local governments request public hearing for the mining complex “Kazandol”

On 23rd January 2018, SARDIC MTS DOOEL Skopje, the company that operates the Kazandol mining complex, submitted a request for issuing A - Integrated Environmental Permit (A-IEP). In an effort to intercept the acquiring of the A – IEP for the Kazandol mine (thus practically losing the battle), the parties concerned, using the provisions of the Law on Environment (Article 103, paragraph 1), submitted a request to the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning to conduct a Public hearing. According to the Ministry's notification, published on March 2, 2018, the A-IEP applicant was given the Conclusion for providing additional documentation to the request for A-IEP and a deadline for removing the identified deficiencies on the basis of the Law on Environment. The requests for organizing a public hearing on the basis of the Request for issuance of A-IEP for the Kazandol mining complex will be organized after the completion of all previously stated activities and in accordance with the Law on Environment.

Upcoming month highlights on an EU level

Call for Proposal for the Second Phase of the Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP-II)

The call for proposals for the second phase of the Civil Society Support Programme in Turkey implemented by the Turkish Ministry for European Union Affairs has been published. With a total budget of 3 million euros, the programme aims to support projects for increasing administrative and financial sustainability, communication and advocacy skills of CSOs; promoting active citizenship and/or participation of CSOs to decision-making and strengthening transparency and accountability of CSOs. Associations, foundations, federations and confederations of associations or foundations and cooperatives from Turkey and Europe can apply for the call, for minimum and maximum grant amounts of 60.000 euro and 150.000 euro respectively. The proposals must be submitted to Central Finance and Contracts Unit before May 8, 2018 at 17:00 hrs (local time of Turkey). Detailed information about the call can be found at https://www.ab.gov.tr/51190_en.html

The role of low carbon fuels in decarbonising transport: the emerging consensus from international initiatives

This conference will focus on the role of advanced biofuels and other low carbon fuels in the transport systems of the future. It will bring together representatives of the European Commission and from international initiatives working specifically in the area of low carbon fuels, including the Biofuture Platform, below50, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the Alternative Renewable Transport Forum Fuels (ART Fuels Forum), the Renewable Energy and Bioenergy Divisions of the International Energy Agency (IEA), and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Panels will consider opportunities for national collaboration in the development of sustainable biofuels as well as the outlook for EU policies, and there will be a chance to compare sustainable transport and biomass policies of different countries within the EU and outside it.

Start date : April 10, 2018

End date : April 11, 2018

Where:

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Brussels, Belgium

European Commission, Energy, environment and climate, Research and innovation, Transport and travel

More info: https://europa.eu/newsroom/events/role-low-carbon-fuels-decarbonising-transport-emerging-consensus-international-initiatives_en

Biodiver-City: Enhancing urban biodiversity and ecosystem services to make cities more resilient

This conference, organised by the European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC), the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the EnRoute project, aims to deliver a set of key messages and principles on how cities can contribute to regional, national and European biodiversity policy, goals and targets.

The conference will address the following key questions:

- What is our present knowledge of urban biodiversity? What indicators are used and what are the current patterns and trends reveal about urban biodiversity?
- Why is urban biodiversity important? What are the links between urban biodiversity and urban ecosystem services and with wellbeing?
- Is a high urban biodiversity important for citizens and other stakeholders? How can citizens monitor biodiversity?
- How can urban green infrastructure be designed and managed to maintain and enhance urban biodiversity and ecosystem services:

Start date : April 24, 2018
End date : April 24, 2018
Where: Sofia, Bulgaria

European Commission, Energy, environment and climate, EU regional and urban development

More info: https://europa.eu/newsroom/events/biodiver-city-enhancing-urban-biodiversity-and-ecosystem-services-make-cities-more-resilient_en

3rd annual seminar of the Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre

The Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre (DRMKC) aims at enhancing the EU and the Member States' resilience to disasters and their capacity to prevent, prepare and respond to emergencies through the joint work of scientific groups, policymakers, practitioners and other relevant stakeholders. The principal activities of the DRMKC are to improve the science-based services and analysis; to enhance the use and uptake of research and operational knowledge; and to advance science and technology in Disaster Risk Management (DRM).

Following the previous seminars in London and Rome, the 3rd DRMKC seminar is an opportunity to meet actors engaged in DRM to jointly discuss about the progress made in up to now and which new areas could be explored in the next year.

Start date : April 26, 2018

End date : April 27, 2018

Where: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria

European Commission, Presidency of the Council

of the EU, International aid, development and cooperation, Research and innovation

More Info: https://europa.eu/newsroom/events/3rd-annual-seminar-disaster-risk-management-knowledge-centre_en

National Resource Centre for Civil Society in Albania

The establishment of a National Resource Centre for Civil Society in Albania is the purpose of a call proposals launched on 16th March 2018 by DG NEAR under the Civil Society Facility & Media Programme for Western Balkans and Turkey 2016-2017(CSF). The global objective is to strengthen capacities of civil society to be effective, transparent and accountable independent actors and contribute to an environment that is conducive to civil society and to participatory democracy and the EU integration process in Albania. The overall indicative amount under this call for proposals is EUR 500,000.00. Deadline for applications: June 16, 2018.



EASD visited company with circular economy in practice"- On March 8, 2018 EASD representatives Mrs. Aleksandra Mladenovic, ENV.net project coordinator and Mrs. Dijana Sarac, ENV.net project assistant, had opportunity to visit the factory FEPLD, SME from the City of Cacak, which produces waterproof eco-panels, construction material made by pressed particles of recycled Tetra Pak. The Eco-panels are waterproof, environmentally sound, with high durability, used for termo-isolation, and they are easy to set-up. There is a problem to get enough raw materials, taking into account that Tetra Pak is not material usually collected as separate secondary raw material. Another problem is that used Tetra Pak cartons are dirty and take lot of space if they are not flattened. Having in mind that EASD as national operator for Eco-schools program works with school children and students on the project Eco-package, supported by Tetra Pak Production for many years, also be faced with this problem, EASD will try to find the best option to support development of circular economy in Serbia, and to involve as much as possible the consumers of Tetra Pak carton in the recycling system.