

Aarhus in Practice

Eco-Logic, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Delibasino village, Banja Luka city)

Project Background

Delibasino village has a protected forest within its geographic reach. However, current zoning practices enable some limited industrial activities within this area – activities which are governed by the larger Municipality (Banja Luka). Delibasino village would like to determine which portions of the forest in their geographic area are protected, and what, if any, activities are allowed within these forested boundaries. Using public participation methods, a proposal will be developed regarding the boundaries and regime of management of these forested areas and presented to the Assembly of Banja Luka city for approval.

Goals and Overall Objectives

Raise Public Awareness for Public Participation

The general public must become aware of public participation mechanisms, the Aarhus Convention, and the issue surrounding the zoning of the forested area so they can contribute to the drafting of the forest protection area proposal.

Encouraging Information Flow between Government and Non-Governmental Sectors

In order for the protected area proposal to be approved, understanding of its usefulness, and the principles of the Aarhus Convention, need to be reinforced through workshops linking government and non-governmental organizations.

Soliciting Public Opinion

Through a combination of traditional and internet-based methods, public opinion will be gathered on the draft proposal and ideas for the uses and protection of a rezoned Forest Park.

Establishing Forest Park

After exhaustive public participation mechanisms have been undertaken, a proposal – if approved by the municipal council – will establish a protected forest area in which villagers can determine its future use.

How to Get There – Specific Activities

- **Public Awareness Raising and Information Solicitation**

After the formulation of a working group (composed of 5 to 10 representatives from stakeholders, beneficiaries, and other villages which have undertaken similar measures), a public awareness campaign will be launched to inform villagers of what a rezoned area could mean, current issues, and the public involvement laid down in the Aarhus Convention. Throughout the 10 month project, diverse information channels will be developed and used, including a website and will be supported by media coverage. Feedback will be solicited throughout the project through the internet, as well as a Forest Protection/Aarhus comment box.

- **Workshop and Draft Proposal**

To ensure that decision-makers and the locals who are the beneficiaries are well prepared to give input in the process of defining the area and setting up its regime a capacity building workshop will be held. This will allow participants to increase their skills for having constructive dialogue and to develop the main elements of the draft proposal.

- **Public Hearing, Feedback, and Final Proposal**

In efforts to bounce ideas off the public, a public hearing will alert villagers to the contents of the draft proposal. In addition to ongoing feedback mechanisms (internet-based, comment box), hearing input will be included into a revised proposal which will be forwarded to the Assembly of Banja Luka city for deliberations and likely adoption.

Outcomes

Eco-Logic fully supports the Aarhus Convention's introduction of public participation into the environmental sector. The success of the rezoning project is a means to demonstrate the effectiveness of public participation mechanisms, encouraging their future use for other environment related decision making issues, while benefiting the villagers and ecology of Delibasino.