

## Kosovo/a (territory currently under interim UN administration)

### Public Participation in the Planning Process for New Mining Areas in Obliq Municipality

*Implemented by NGO Ekoklina*

*Implementation period: Dec 2005-Oct 2006*



---

#### Project background

The Kosovo Electro Energy Company (KEEC) prepares to expand power generation to keep pace with growing electricity needs, which means that the land used for coal mining will be expanded. While KEEC's expansion seems relatively unstoppable because it is supported by *Kosovo's Strategy for Energy*, a draft document produced by the Ministry of Mining and Energy and is planned to be adopted by Parliament, the Ministry's document itself calls for public feedback on the draft document. NGO Ekoklina facilitates comprehensive public feedback on the document through consultations with the municipality most affected by energy expansion, Obliq. With possibilities existing to review, analyze, and possibly amend certain articles of the document, Ekoklina engages in public participation mechanism in accordance with the Aarhus Convention in order to qualify the introduction of new mining areas with public input.

#### Activities implemented

- Introduction of the project: various stakeholders' groups were analyzed, contacted and informed about the project and its expected outcomes.
- Working Group, consisting different interest groups and stakeholders, has been formed and meets regularly. Working group is created aiming to be a body who works closely with the authorities, detailing, defining, articulating and concretizing environmental concerns of civil society in Obliq.
- Regular media contact has been established; a lot of attention from the media has been gained.
- Questionnaire has been prepared and conducted in order to get to know how much local citizens in Obliq municipality are:
  - informed about the government's ideas to open new mining areas in their living area,
  - informed about their rights to participate in such type of decision-making process and in which extend they would like to cooperate,
  - concerned about environmental conditions in their neighbourhood and what is their attitude about possible activities regarding new mining areas.
- The results of the questionnaire have been analyzed by the Working Group.
- First **draft amendments to the *Kosovo's Strategy for Energy*** has been drafted by the Working Group.
- Preparation has been made for the public meeting in order to discuss about the proposed amendments to the Strategy.

- On 6<sup>th</sup> of May the Workshop has been organized in order to give an overview of the Aarhus requirements and Kosovo legal structure (the opportunities the environmental legal system offers for public participation), increase the awareness of the representatives of the civil society about their role and rights to participate in the decision-making process, and discuss about the good/bad local practices examples, in order to encourage and motivate people to take more actively part of the decision-making process.
- Leaflets to increase the public awareness about the government' initiative and the rights of the Aarhus have been prepared, printed (400 copies) and disseminated.
- On 8<sup>th</sup> of June the Public Debate has been organised in order to bring together all important stakeholders, present the document the Working Group has been drafting as a reflection to the *Kosovo's Strategy for Energy* and to get to know peoples' opinion about the plans for the new mining area, certain problems regarding to the KEEC planned activities, and collect people's opinions, remarks and suggestions in order to concretize amendments drafted by the Working Group. Two main discussed issues were:
  - the ecological fund, the access of municipal authorities and civil society to the fund managing, and its concretization in the Law on Environment;
  - *Kosovo Strategy for Energy*, it's relation to the environmental protection, expropriation, and other issues regarding to the health and social issues affected by Kosovo Electro Energy Company (KEEC) activities.
- Comments, suggestions and queries from the Public Debate has been collected and discussed afterward in the Working Group meeting, the finalized and concretized amendments has been are submitted to the Ministry of Energy and Mining and to the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning.
- Media has been regularly contacted during the course of the project, the media has been active of recovering the subjects, dedicating a lot of space to the public debate, making reports to the central news, interviewing the key people of the process, experts and citizens.
- Project materials have been completed, documented, printed and published on the website of Obiliq Municipality.



### **Final results and outcomes**

The project succeeded to increase the awareness about the legal tools, possibilities and obligation to take part of the local decision-making and influence the final outcome. It also established a close cooperation with the local authorities of Obiliq, involved the officials as well as the representatives of the local civil society groups to the working group activities, initiate them to analyze the *Kosovo's Strategy for Energy* and it's further

impacts for the local community, draft necessary amendments, present them in front of the public, collect feedbacks and send them to the relevant central authorities. **Working group members are committed to continue to work as a group who together with Ekoklina will be in charge of monitoring the proceeding of proposed amendments. The municipal authorities, Ekoklina and the Working group members are committed to sign the Memorandum of Cooperation and to serve as an initiating and coordinating body for public activities in Obiliq municipality.**

Good media coverage caused a wider debate on environmental and social issues, due to the wide spread of the issues, the implementing NGO Ekoklina received many comments, appreciations and praises.

While the local municipality showed a high interest and respect towards the activities, the central governmental institution kept being passive, a proper contact to the investor (KEEC) was unsuccessful: their involvement into the Public Debate, as well as participation in the Working Group failed, KEEC kept avoiding the process by giving various technical “reasons”.

A summary of the project description, its activities and outcomes, project presentations, reports from the Workshop and Public Debate, report on questionnaire, etc. are available for all interested parties and individuals. The material is put on the website of the Obiliq Municipality, as well as to other places where access of citizens is frequent.