

System for Environmental Decision-Making

ORT – Training for Sustainable Development, Macedonia (Municipalities of Centar, Gazi Baba, and Zelenikovo)

Project Background

While environmental issues vary for the Municipalities of Gazi Baba, Centar, and Zelenikovo, they all face one similar problem: citizens and administrators do not communicate when it comes to addressing environmental issues. With the support of the Mayors of each municipality, Training for Sustainable Development will work with administrators, citizens, and other stakeholders in one pilot municipality to implement a System for Environmental Decision-Making (SEDM) in line with the Aarhus Convention – a UN-initiative to promote environmental decision-making through public participation that Macedonia has endorsed. The other two municipalities will be debriefed on the project and provide suggestions and feedback. The pilot system will enable effective public participation by ensuring public access to local decision-makers and documenting monitoring public input. Once piloted, the lessons learned will be summarized in a SEDM Handbook, which will be distributed to the other two municipalities.

Goals and Overall Objectives

Introducing a System for Environmental Decision-Making

Right now none of the municipalities cited have the capacity to react quickly to environmental problems, let alone consult the public effectively. Through the pilot, Training for Sustainable Development will bring stakeholders together to craft and implement a System for Environmental Decision-Making in one pilot municipality.

Drafting an Environmental Action Plan

Training for Sustainable Development will undertake a number of tactics to solicit opinions on environmental issues from the public, engage all stakeholders in the pilot municipality to draft an Environmental Action Plan in order to define local environmental conditions, and provide all stakeholders with a means to address these issues through the SEDM.

Sharing Lessons Learned with Other Municipalities

which will be published as a Handbook to guide current and future activities related to environmental decision-making.

The pilot case will be shared with the other two Municipalities throughout the process and in the drafting of a Handbook which will outline best practices in the System for Environmental Decision-Making.

How to Get There – Specific Activities

- **Selecting the Pilot Municipality**
After setting up Working Teams in each Municipality and establishing databases to monitor the level of public participation and governmental responses, a pilot municipality will be chosen among all Working Teams to implement the System for Environmental Decision-Making. An environmental mailbox will also be set up in the pilot municipality to enable citizens leave their letters, comments, and requests to access municipal authorities any time of day.
- **Raising Public Awareness/Media Promotion**
Promotional and educational material – including posters, brochures, pencils, bags, identity cards, and a Handbook will be produced and distributed to the pilot’s residents (brochures to the other two municipalities). These documents and materials will inform the public about current activities, provide background on legal requirements, and encourage public participation. The media will be encouraged through media releases to follow the project (news articles, etc.).
- **Organizing Workshops for Municipal Staff**
All municipalities will be involved in a training workshop to facilitate the implementation of the Strategy for Environmental Decision-Making.
- **Implementing the SEDM**
The SEDM will include the following:
 - organized public events to solicit feedback on key environmental issues in the community and producing a summary report, the priorities of which will culminate in a citizens’ Environmental Action Plan;
 - the regular participation of citizens’ representatives on Municipal Council meetings as points from the Action Plan are discussed, to present the official opinion of the community in 30 minutes so that authorities can take public opinion into account;
 - the recording of incoming public requests and municipal responses, the results from which will be presented to the Mayor; and
 - the monthly posting of environmental information so that citizens are more informed of environmental factors that affect public health.
- **Evaluating the Project**
An evaluation report on the SEDM will be published which will include lessons learned and proposals for improvements. A handbook will be written on the Strategy and circulated to the other Municipalities and other relevant stakeholders at a final conference.

Outcomes

Throughout the 10 month project, ORT will work with Municipal authorities to enact public participation strategies, focusing on one pilot while encouraging others to follow suit. In the end ORT hopes to improve the practices of the Aarhus Convention’s second pillar in all three Municipalities.