

Together for a Clean Environment

Permaculture and Peacebuilding Center (PPC), Macedonia (Shtip)

Project Background

The town of Shtip has serious waste management issues. Through a low level of awareness about ecological issues, a lack of garbage baskets (collection sites), and a lack of garbage collection by public utility company Isar (which also lacks technical equipment, adequate organizational structure, human resources, and financial resources). Through field research, PPC has located several illegal dumping sites, most of which occupy the center of town. In efforts to correct this problem PPC will use public participation mechanisms as laid out in the Aarhus Convention to identify and incorporate stakeholders and the public in drafting an Action Plan for Waste Management, as well as an annex outlining the appropriate public participation procedures undertaken to achieve such a document. The project will provide solutions to the current waste problem while encouraging the further application of the Aarhus Convention.

Goals and Overall Objectives

- **Raising Public Awareness About The Aarhus Convention And Environmental Issues**
Through brochures, dialogue, and eventually, a How-To annex, PPC will raise the awareness of stakeholders regarding the usefulness and possible implementation of the Aarhus Convention – particularly the second pillar regarding public participation. Through project activities, the awareness of waste problems in the city will also be addressed so that solutions can be found.
- **Drafting An Action Plan To Solve Stip's Waste Problems**
Through a series of activities including surveys, meetings with a group of stakeholders (ie. the Steering Committee), public debates and hearing, PPC will facilitate the drafting of an Action Plan for Waste Management. It is hoped that authorities and the public utility will implement this plan to clean up Shtip's streets.
- **Producing A Public Participation How-To Guide**
An annex to the Action Plan (a How-to Guide) will give readers a step-by-step means by which the current project was undertaken using public participation mechanism, so that similar steps can be taken in future issues requiring public input.

How to Get There – Specific Activities

- **Raising Public Awareness/Media Campaign**

PPC will produce leaflets informing the public of the project, problems, and how to get involved. Throughout the six month project, the media will be invited to all relevant activities, including the initial meeting of stakeholders, the public debate, and the presentation of the final Action Plan (which will also be available to via the internet).

- **Conducting Initial Meetings With Stakeholders**
Stakeholders will be invited to an initial meeting. Participants will include 14 Presidents of local communities (representing public interests), 3 representatives of the Commission for Environmental Issues, one representative from the local government, 2 representatives from Isar public utility, 1 communal inspector, and 1 representative each from the business and NGO sector. Participants will be introduced to the Aarhus Convention, and project activities.
- **Conducting Meetings With 14 Communities, Training Surveyors, And Conduction Of The Survey**
At these meetings, the public will be introduced to the Aarhus Convention. They will elect a representative to conduct a questionnaire with 50 members of their own community. Representatives will then be trained on interviewing techniques and then conduct the survey, which will query residents on their awareness of the waste problem, how/if it affects them and in what ways, what solutions they propose, whether they are able to access environmental information at the local administrative level, etc..
- **Holding A Public Debate**
Together with other stakeholders, a public debate will facilitate the reporting of the survey's findings. All information will be summarized. Local authorities will also provide insight into their work. A Steering Committee will then be established to draft an Action Plan based upon information presented in the debate.
- **Drafting The Action Plan, Vetting It, And Presenting The Final Version To Members Of The Council**
The Steering Committee will meet six times to draft an Action Plan. Once drafted, the Plan will be presented at 14 meetings with representatives of urban communities (facilitated by the President of relevant communities). Then the Steering Committee will hold a 7 meeting to amend the Draft Action Plan according to relevant public input, after which point the Final Action Plan will be presented to members of the Council and made available to the public (through the internet and public informational sites). The Action Plan will then be delivered more widely to institutions and the public and a How-to Guide relating to public participation will be written and delivered to interested institutions and NGOs.

Outcomes

While it is impossible to say whether or not the Council, local authorities, and the public utility will undertake the measures outlined in the Action Plan, the project can, will, and should encourage authoritative stakeholders to address waste problems, and to learn from the

project that public participation is a useful and productive means by which to achieve solutions to environmental problems affecting the public. It is hoped that the materials produced and lessons learned will encourage other communities to engage in similar activities and forward the processes set out in the Aarhus Convention.