



Stopping the Slide

Making the Best of Varna's Beach



A coordinated urban plan could combat erosion, regulate construction and stabilise the Varna beach community.

BACKGROUND

In the seaside resort of Varna, due to erosion, earth has fallen from the cliffs above the shoreline, leading to a deterioration of the beach area. A profusion of slapdash, temporary structures that violate environmental and sanitary regulations create an eyesore, and noisy discos disturb residents. In addition to these problems, the town needs to find a sustainable way to use the local hot springs.

OBJECTIVES

In developing a detailed urban plan, the project team strove to:

- supply information to the public, according to the principles of Aarhus Convention, about plans for future development of the urban coastal zone;
- get feedback from the public about the vision and the planning process;
- gain public support for the plan and involve the public in decisions; and
- incorporate conclusions from public feedback into the plan according to the principles of the Aarhus Convention.



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To acquire information from the public for strategic environmental assessment (SEA), the team aimed to:

- identify the main environmental concerns of the public;
- identify the purposes, goals and intentions of the different groups concerned with the beach;
- gather creative ideas for the future use of environmental resources; and
- devise concrete technical solutions for environmental problems.

METHODOLOGY

To meet its goals, the project team:

- identified stakeholders;
- approached the public;
- selected techniques for approaching and involving the public in the decision making of the SEA process;
- had specialists analyse the collected information according to the terms of reference; and
- solicited and received a decision on the SEA report by the competent authority.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The project team managed to:

- create a high level of public awareness about the project;
- win public support for the planning process;
- build confidence in the urban planning decisions;
- demonstrate important connections between the Aarhus Convention and the Espoo Convention (the SEA Protocol);
- come up with technical alternatives for building the coastal drinking water supply and sewer system;
- find technical options for utilising the hot springs; and
- plan a transverse bypass, a solution for beach erosion that would increase the beach area in the urban coastal zone.

FOLLOW-UP

After the project, the team resolved to:

- ensure that alternative ways of involving the public would become standard practice in municipal strategic planning;
- promote this practice to other coastal cities in the Black Sea Basin;
- develop an anti-erosion beach-enlargement project for the urban beach zone on the basis of the transverse bypass method, which was suggested by experts who were not initially involved in the planning process; and
- develop a water resource management strategy for the Municipality of Varna.

