

Institution building

The strengthening of environmental institutions in South Eastern Europe is a precondition for the successful implementation of environmental policy reforms, for drafting and enforcing environmental legislation, and for attracting environmental investment. Therefore, since REReP's inception, institution building has been identified as its area of highest priority.

Projects cover law drafting and policy development as well as the implementation of legislation and policies developed. Assistance is given for the development of pieces of legislation and local environmental actions plans, investment planning, project management, and the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements in the region. Numerous workshops, study visits, trainings, seminars, exchange programmes and project visits aim to build the necessary capacities. These activities are complemented by the publication of websites, project databases, practical guides, and studies on the current situation and possible solutions. A basic principle of all projects is the establishment of regional and local expert networks to foster dialogue and exchange experience. Special emphasis is given to the transfer of best practices and lessons learnt from EU member states, especially from the recently acceded South Eastern European members Bulgaria and Romania.

Priority Environmental Investment Programme

PEIP is the first attempt to define environmental investment priorities in South Eastern Europe in a consistent way in order to encourage an effective and efficient response to the funding sources available.

OUTPUTS: donor profiles, database of hot spots, 33 pilot projects, workshops, regional meetings, finance studies

Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network (ECENA)

The mission of ECENA is to increase the effectiveness of inspectorate bodies and to promote compliance with EU environmental requirements in order to protect the environment in its member countries.

OUTPUTS: exchange programme, study tours, peer reviews, participation in other networks and projects

Assistance in Environmental Law Drafting

The project ensured a regional strategic approach to legal drafting, enhancing regional cooperation as a key element in the approximation process, while also providing targeted assistance at the country/entity level.

OUTPUTS: network meetings, workshops, study visits, short-term legal assistance, conferences

Support to environmental civil society

Support to environmental civil society is seen as a contribution to democratic development, national and international stability and security, and a solution to environmental problems in the South Eastern Europe countries. Civil society serves as a vital element in ensuring that democratic institutional capacities are truly embedded, and that environmental investments made during reconstruction reflect broad public interest.

The projects developed within the REReP context demonstrate the breadth of action needed to support the civil society sector: projects targeted at environmental education and information play a large part as do projects ensuring public participation in decision making, those giving financial support to civil society organisations, and those creating electronic networks between civil society organisations. To ensure public information and effective public participation in environmental decision making, efforts have been concentrated on implementing the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention), which was adopted by the European Community as a whole in 1998. Surveys on the state of environmental civil society, roundtable discussions, public awareness campaigns, guidance materials, project grants, workshops and technical and legal trainings ensured capacity building on the political as well as civil-society levels.

Education for Sustainability – the Green Pack

To raise environmental awareness among youngsters, the REC developed an educational toolkit for teachers of environmental subjects: the Green Pack. It covers topics such as consumer behaviour, climate, pollution and ecology.

OUTPUTS: teacher's hand book, CD-ROM with computer-based materials, board game, video cassette

Pilot Environmental Legal Advocacy and Advisory Center (Bulgaria)

The environmental legal advocacy/advisory centre in Bulgaria delivers professional legal expertise to citizens and NGOs for protection of their environmental rights.

OUTPUTS: workshops, project grants, regional network meetings, pilot legal advisory centre, work on legal cases

Sustainable Development Grants Programme

This programme provides the financial assistance required by NGOs to strengthen their role in promoting sustainability. The project comprises two components: grants for region-based cooperative projects, and grants for projects on national level.

OUTPUTS: regional – 6 projects, 17 NGOs; national – 36 projects, 42 NGOs

Reducing environmental health threats and loss of biodiversity

Exceptionally rich in biodiversity, the Balkans are considered a treasure chest of nature in Europe. But decades of authoritarian rule and political instability led to serious environmental neglect. Today, public health in South Eastern Europe is threatened not only by outdated industrial parks, but also by recent air, water and soil pollution derived from high energy use and rapid changes in consumption and transport patterns. In order to combine conservation of the region's natural heritage with improvements to health security and economic progress, REReP promotes the importance of using natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Sustainability projects under REReP deal mainly with the management of waste and water. Throughout the Balkans, untreated wastewater pollutes water resources and inadequate infrastructure impedes the collection, selection and recycling of a growing amount of waste. Therefore, sound management of waste and water resources ranks among the most challenging and cost-intensive area of environmental reform in South Eastern Europe. In order to get activities off to the right start, needs assessments were conducted. To address the needs, REReP provided guidelines as well as training sessions on relevant legislation, policies and technical solutions.

Despite the particular good recent progress in reducing health threats, however, biodiversity loss continues unabated. The most effective way to curb biodiversity loss is overall communication on the sectoral, regional and international levels. Therefore, the Balkan Biodiversity Conservation Forum was established as a platform to share experiences, bring together decision makers, and facilitate inter-sectoral and regional cooperation and action.

Impact of Municipal Waste Water on River Vrbas (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

The project aims to reduce pollution from municipal wastewater in the River Vrbas. Improved water quality positively affects also the water quality of the Sava River. The project promotes non-conventional technologies to solve the problems.

OUTPUTS: training sessions, provision of guidelines, project management

Water and Wastewater in Industry (Croatia)

This project provided insight into IPPC permitting, monitoring, and reporting. The target groups are industry representatives, business associations, the Croatian Ministry of Environment and inspectorates.

OUTPUTS: training sessions, provision of guidelines

Cross-Border Cooperation through Environmental Investment and Planning

The priority environmental problems identified at three sites concentrate on water supply, and the collection and discharge of wastewater. Solving these environmental problems through carefully planned investments is a high priority for local communities.

OUTPUTS: workshops, feasibility studies, trainings, stakeholder meetings

Support to environmental regional cooperation mechanisms and cross-border initiatives

The promotion of regional cooperation and cross-border initiatives is at the heart of the REReP concept. All REReP activities and projects are based on the understanding that regional cooperation is a catalyst for establishing trust and overcoming the legacy of environmental degradation. Since the region became politically more stable, another important motivation to cooperate is the common goal of European integration. To this end, the countries of the region have identified cross-border cooperation as a priority area and have taken further steps to enhance it.

Regional environmental cooperation is indispensable when it comes to sustainable management of shared natural resources. REReP places special emphasis on transboundary wetlands – the Sava, Drina, Neretva and Danube rivers, and lakes of Shkoder, Ohrid and Prespa are good examples of working cross-border management projects. Field research and stakeholder consultations ensure a common understanding of the relevant sites. On-site research, websites and databases provide the necessary detailed information.

Cross-border meetings, trainings, workshops, study tours and exchange programmes help to establish management bodies comprising experts from all countries sharing a natural site. Awareness of the distinctiveness of the sites is raised by transboundary educational activities, cross-border events, and the promotion of local traditions in order to develop sustainable tourism. As a result, environmental regional and cross-border cooperation has developed to a great extent since the launch of REReP. More and more projects and cross-border activities are succeeding, using a variety of instruments, models and approaches for joint work.

Transboundary cooperation through the management of shared natural resources I

The **West Stara Planina** mountains are situated on the Bulgarian-Serbian border. They are known for their rich biological and geological diversity, as well as their cultural heritage.

OUTPUTS: study tours, branding workshop, website, cross-border meetings

Transboundary cooperation through the management of shared natural resources II

The **Neretva River** runs through Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The last 30 km of the river spreads into an alluvial delta before emptying into the Adriatic Sea. The delta is an area of vast marshlands abundant in flora and fauna. This habitat provides shelter for many species of birds, fish and other animals.

OUTPUTS: website, workshops, exchange programme, field research

Transboundary cooperation through the management of shared natural resources III

Shkoder Lake, shared by Montenegro and Albania, is the largest lake on the Balkan Peninsula. Relatively shallow with the deepest point reaching below sea level, the lake lies in a crypto-depression.

OUTPUTS: education programme, publication of bird counts, exchange programme, cross-border meetings, trainings

The Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme (REReP) Foundation of Integration

Introduction

The Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme (REReP) provides a unique framework for environmental priority-setting, coordination and project implementation in South Eastern Europe. Launched in 1999 as a regional initiative, REReP is not just the recognition that environmental problems need regional rather than national solutions, but also an early attempt to establish contact and trust between the different actors from various countries.



After an initial period of setting up and improving the REReP mechanism, the second phase saw REReP's real potential begin to blossom. Manifold activities were developed under the programme areas of institution building, cross-border cooperation, civil society building, and biodiversity and health protection. Countless workshops, seminars, regional meetings, study tours and publications strived towards capacity building at the political as well as civil-society levels. To maximise efficiency, emphasis was placed on networking, investment planning, and development of an understanding of sound project management. In 2006, donors allocated a total of around EUR 70 million to ensure implementation of the programme's goals.

Eight years after the launch of REReP, South Eastern Europe is well on the way to inclusion in the European Union. Bulgaria and Romania entered the EU in early 2007. Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey are candidate countries, while the doors are kept open to the other countries of the region, as well. EU candidates and potential candidates are now facing the challenge of taking over the most ambitious environmental system of the EU in the shortest possible time. In view of this evolved political situation and in order to continue approximation to the environmental norms and standards of the EU in the most effective manner, the time has come to develop REReP further.

The implementation period of the programme's current platform is scheduled to expire in 2009. Building on the programme's achievements, but strengthening and reforming its operations to better address the challenges of EU accession, REReP will be replaced in 2009 by the Regional Environmental Network for Accession (RENA). This successor programme will focus more sharply on the exchange of experience concerning preparatory work for future EU membership in the field of environment. As an expert and working-level network, RENA will complement the political level of environmental dialogue between the EU and its candidates and potential candidates. Consequently, RENA is planned to be not only open to candidates and potential candidates of the West Balkans, but to Turkey as well. To ensure the transfer of lessons learnt from EU approximation in the environmental field, Bulgaria and Romania will be invited to continue their participation as observers in RENA.

This leaflet introduces the reader to the history of the programme, the structure of its unique mechanism, and recent activities carried out under the different programme areas.

The process

Background

REReP was launched in 1999 as a participatory, flexible and transparent process. Its aim was to ensure that environmental protection was systematically considered during efforts at physical and economical reconstruction in a region which in the past has suffered from political and economic instability.

In March 2000, the ministers of environment from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia met in Skopje to agree upon REReP in the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo (territory under UN interim administration) joined the REReP a few months later. A Task Force for Implementation of the REReP was established, and the ministers asked the REC to act as secretariat.

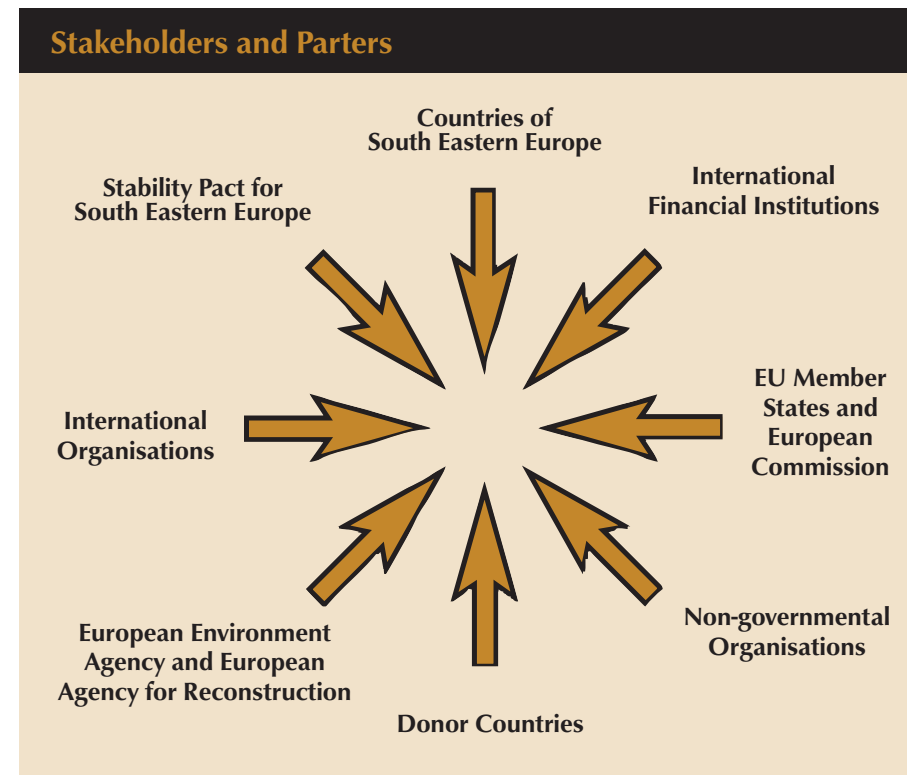
With the inception of REReP in March 2000, a list of immediate project priorities was set up and became part of the Stability Pact's "Quick Start" package of projects. In 2001, the stakeholders created a strong link to the Stabilisation and Association Process of the European Union as well. An independent external review of REReP for the European Commission was carried out four years after REReP's establishment. Based on the review's recommendations and discussions, a two-year REReP work plan was approved for implementation in 2006-2007.

Programme goals

REReP was developed on the basis of a common understanding among South Eastern European countries of their environmental responsibilities. The strong country involvement in the development and implementation of projects has resulted in broad acceptance and ownership of the programme. This approach has developed long-lasting trust and confidence among the countries and has rebuilt the regional dialogue in achieving common goals. To ensure further commitment of the countries to the process and to reflect the needs of the region as precisely as possible, the programme's objectives have been adjusted continuously.

The overall goals of the REReP are:

- to create functioning environmental institutions and to develop a sound, effectively enforced environmental legal and policy framework which approximates the environmental norms and standards of the EU;
- to strengthen civil society in a way that enhances environmental awareness, gives the public access to environmental information and inspires citizens to participate in environmental decision making;
- to achieve measurably reduced levels of environmental pollution and to minimise environmental pressures arising from economic recovery, with the corresponding health benefits that follow;
- to achieve environmental regional cooperation on cross-border issues in a way that meets the obligations of the Stabilisation and Association Process; and
- to reduce the loss of the exceptional rich biodiversity of South Eastern Europe.



The actors

The strength of the REReP mechanism lies not only in forming a unique environmental partnership between the countries of the South Eastern European region, but also in the immediate integration of as many environmental stakeholders as possible. Besides the countries themselves, representatives of donor countries, international organisations, institutions and non-governmental organisations take part in the meetings of the Task Force and are consulted during project implementation. The approach of REReP to involve all actors has proven to be a successful way to build up trust, confidence and environmental security. Active cooperation contributes to the transparency of the project activities and better coordination of the assistance.

The REReP Task Force, consisting of representatives from the environmental ministries of the participating countries, plays a crucial role in the process. This body normally meets once per year – observed by representatives of donor countries, international organisations, institutions and non-governmental organisations – and reviews the implementation progress, provides guidance and makes decisions on the programme as a whole. Since their EU accession, Bulgaria and Romania have had observer status as well. The Task Force is co-chaired by the European Commission and one of the countries on a rotating basis.

With the establishment of REReP in 2000, the REC was appointed to serve as secretariat of the Task Force. The responsibilities of the secretariat include: preparation and organisation of task force meetings, assistance to the Task Force in the assessment of REReP priorities, implementation of Task Force decisions between the meetings, assistance to the participating countries in project formulation and design, facilitation of communication between all stakeholders by providing information on the ongoing implementation process, fundraising, and facilitation of donor coordination to avoid duplication or omission of activities.

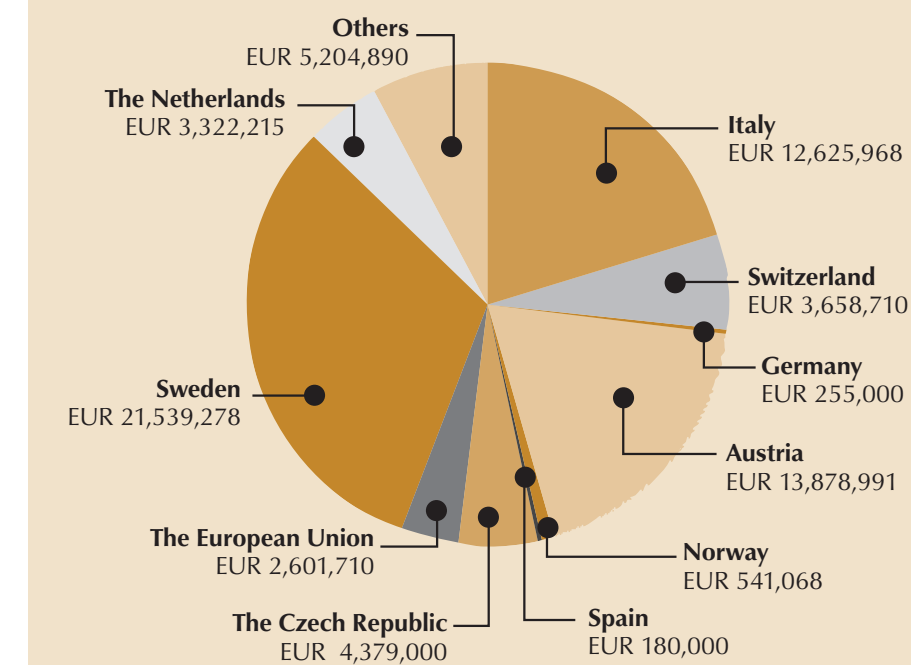


Implementation

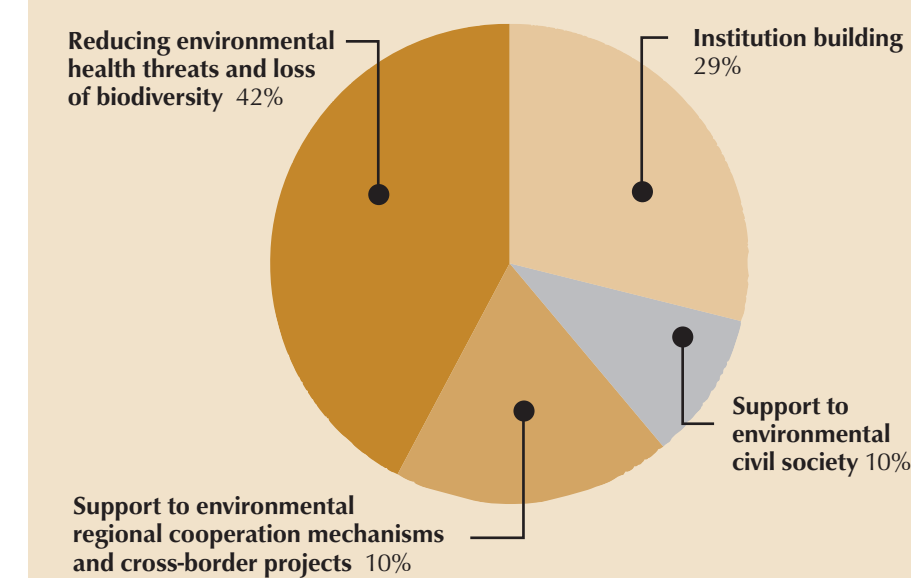
The REReP coordination mechanism continued to enable targeted donor assistance to the countries of South Eastern Europe. Until 2005, the overall amount of financial assistance exceeded EUR 600 million. The overall amount of the ongoing projects in 2006 was EUR 68,186,330, of which 42 percent (EUR 29,063,574) of the overall amount was allocated to projects to reduce environmental health threats and loss of biodiversity, 29 percent (EUR 19,831,583) was provided to projects in institution building. Projects supporting regional and cross-border cooperation mechanisms received 19 per cent (EUR 12,786,261), and civil society building projects received 10 percent (EUR 6,504,912) of the total amount.

REReP Contributions: How the Pie is Sliced *

BY DONOR COUNTRY ...

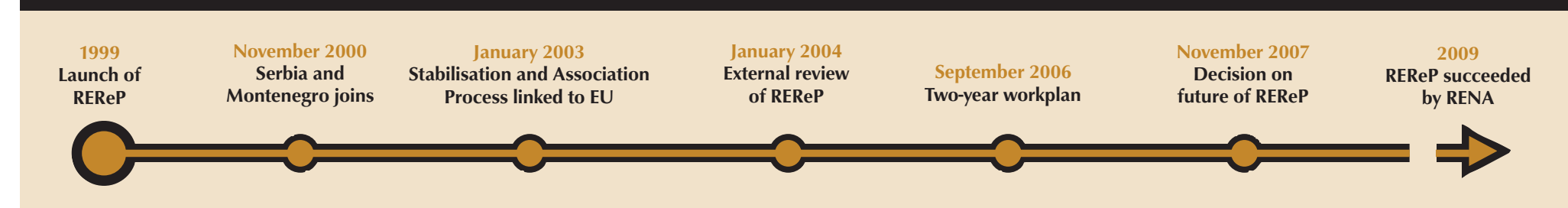


BY PRIORITY AREA ...



* REReP contributions of EUR 68,186,330 as collected through November 2006

The REReP Timeline



THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

(REC) is a non-partisan, non-advocacy, not-for-profit international organisation with a mission to assist in solving environmental problems in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The center fulfils this mission by promoting cooperation among non-governmental organisations, governments, businesses and other environmental stakeholders, and by supporting the free exchange of information and public participation in environmental decision making.

The REC was established in 1990 by the United States, the European Commission and Hungary. Today, the REC is legally based on a charter signed by the governments of 29 countries and the European Commission, and on an international agreement with the government of Hungary. The REC has its head office in Szentendre, Hungary, and country offices and field offices in 17 beneficiary countries, which are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey.

Recent donors are the European Commission and the governments of Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as other inter-governmental and private institutions.