



Task Force for Implementation of the
Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme
for South Eastern Europe
(REReP Task Force)

Report of the tenth REReP Task Force meeting



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Tenth REReP Task Force Meeting

Meeting report

Co- chairs:

Mr. Claude ROUAM, Head of Unit for Enlargement and Neighboring Countries, DG Environment, European Commission.

Mrs. Biljana DJUROVIC, Senior Advisor, Department for Environmental Protection, Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Protection, Montenegro

The Task Force for Implementation of the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe (REReP) held its 10th meeting on 27 November, 2007 in Holiday Inn Brussels City Centre in Brussels, Belgium. Representatives of SEE and donor governments, international organisations, international financing institutions were present (see the attached list of participants).

1. Opening of the 10th REReP Task Force meeting by the co-chairs

Mr. Claude ROUAM opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. He emphasized the progress achieved in the Stabilisation and Association process (SAP) to the EU since the last REReP Task Force and especially the agreement signed with Montenegro. He recalled the decisions made at the meeting between the European Commission and the ministers of environment from South Eastern Europe in June 2007 as to the transfer of REReP into Regional Environmental Network for Accession (RENA) and the involvement of Turkey into the future activities. The work within the REReP will expire in May 2009.

Mr. Yngve ENGSTRÖM (Head of Unit for Regional Programmes, DG Enlargement, European Commission) also welcomed the participants. He underlined the continuous support of the European Commission for the REReP within the SAP. Constructive regional cooperation is one of the indicators within the Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAA). REReP facilitates the regional dialogue and capacity building in SEE. Building on the achievements of REReP the next step is the launch of RENA which is a commitment to continue the support for the region, moving from reconstruction to institutional building.

Mrs. Biljana DJUROVIC also greeted the participants. She expressed her wish for the RENA to be as successful as REReP is.

Minor changes were proposed in the draft agenda as to the order and timing of the agenda items. The revised agenda was adopted and copies distributed to the participants.

2. Adoption of the Meeting report from the 9th REReP Task Force

The draft report was circulated to the task force members shortly after the meeting. No comments have been received by the secretariat. The participants adopted the report of the 9th meeting of the REReP Task Force, held on 28-29 September, 2006 in Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

3. Major developments since the 9th REReP Task Force meeting

Ms. Magdalena RUDA, DG Enlargement, European Commission and Ms. Dagmar KALJARIKOVA, DG Environment, European Commission, jointly presented the developments in the Enlargement Process, progress achieved and the way forward. They explained the 2007 Enlargement package, including the recently issued Strategy Paper. Information was given on the status of the accession negotiations with Croatia and Turkey. Details were given on the SAP. Track-record in Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAA) implementation will continue to be an essential element for the EU to consider any membership application. SAA was signed with Albania in June 2006 and trade-related provisions under Interim Agreement entered into force in December 2006. SAA was signed with Montenegro in October 2007 and the Interim Agreement is expected to enter into force in January 2008. SAA was initiated with Serbia in November 2007 and it is to be signed once sufficient progress on conditions set is achieved by Serbia. Technical negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina were completed. Agreement is to be initialled once sufficient progress on conditions set is achieved by Bosnia and Herzegovina. Key messages from the progress reports and priorities for action on country by country basis as per the respective European and Accession partnerships were presented. Main components of Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) and regional initiatives (DABLAS and Energy Community Treaty) and the opportunities for supporting environmental activities were explained. The limited administrative capacity of the SEE countries has been highlighted as one of the key problems. Also in some countries no environmental projects have been proposed under IPA.

(See the presentation in the outcome documents)

Mr. Oswald Hutter reported on the future of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. The official handover of the Stability Pact to the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) is on 1 March 2008. RCC will provide a strong coordination and monitoring mechanism, whereas the Stability Pact was mainly a facilitator. This is expected to enhance the regional ownership of RCC and ensure the self-sustainability of the initiatives. A more streamlined and effective regional co-operation framework under the RCC is envisaged and it will take over the role of the Regional Table and Working Tables including a Secretariat (preparing Ministerial Meetings). RCC members will consist of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECPP) countries, respectively the SEE, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, EU (including European Commission), bilateral donors and international organisations engaged in SEE. Agreed priority areas for future work are: economic and social development, infrastructure, justice and home affairs, security cooperation, building human capital and overarching theme of parliamentary cooperation. RCC Secretariat will be based in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and new Secretary General is Mr. Hido Bišćević. The REC was invited to join the RCC.

(See the presentation in the outcome documents)

4. Overall progress and achievements of REReP since the 9th Task Force meeting and REReP Work Plan 2007 – 2008

Mrs. Marta Szigeti Bonifert, Executive Director of the REC, presented the major developments in REReP implementation since the 9th REReP Task Force. In the priority area of institution building, Assistance in Environmental Law Drafting and Priority Environmental Investment Programme (PEIP) projects are successfully continuing. Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles (PFCFV) activities and Local Environmental Action Planning for Sustainability in the South Eastern Europe are examples of new projects. The work in the area of civil society development focused on a four year programme “SECTOR: Supporting Environmental Civil Society in South Eastern Europe”, improving public participation practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Sustainable Kosovo (as defined by UNSCR 1244). In the area of cross border cooperation, new follow-up activities continued in the Neretva Delta, West Stara Planina and Skadar Lake, and the cross border cooperation through environmental investment and planning has been successfully implemented. In the area of Reducing Environmental Health Threats and Loss of Biodiversity, Additional Services for Support to water quality management in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Preparation of Project Documentation for Construction of Sewerage

Systems and Wastewater Treatment in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were presented as examples of new projects. Five new projects, just recently signed, under institution building and civil society development were mentioned as well. Project managers of the Assistance in Environmental Law Drafting in SEE, Mr. Steven Stec, REC and Priority Environmental Investment Programme (PEIP), Ms. Joanna Fiedler, REC updated the participants on their latest activities. The REReP Task Force Secretariat activities for 2008 and 2009 were introduced. In October 2007 the Secretariat published the new leaflet *Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe – Foundation for Integration*. The leaflet was distributed at the Belgrade “Environment for Europe” Ministerial conference, the General Assembly of the REC and other international events. Two regional meetings on cross border cooperation are planned to take place with possible topics climate change and Natura 2000. The Countries were asked to give their feedback on the topics and indicate availability to host the meetings by 10th December 2007.

(See the presentation and the Progress report in the outcome documents).

The presentations were followed by a discussion, in which the participants in the Task Force meeting gave their comments. The key issues raised are summarised below:

-- Ms. Jelena BERONJA, ENVSEC Regional Desk Officer, UNEP Vienna, presented the progress of the Environment and Security Initiative for South East Europe (ENVSEC). The Initiative focuses on two main environment security aspects: improving regional cooperation for risk management from pollution hotspots as well as the management of shared natural resources extending across borders. The priorities of ENVSEC for the region are as follows: managing and reducing trans-boundary risks of hazardous activities; management of trans-boundary natural resources; cross-cutting issues (awareness, information, education, etc.)

- The REC looks forward to serve the ENVSEC initiative in the capacity of Chair for 2008.

- Reflecting the outcomes of the Progress Report presented by the REC, it was concluded that the distribution of donor support is not allocated equally by the priority areas. Emphasis is given on the institutional strengthening; however more should be given to e.g. regional cross-border cooperation.

- Croatia proposed to combine the climate change meeting with the activities in the national plans. Possible link to the cross-border cooperation under IPA has to be discussed.

- Montenegro proposed to focus the cross-border meeting on climate change on adaptation and vulnerability assessment.

- The countries were kindly asked to accelerate the process of the official Focal Point nomination for REReP.

- Environmental Impact Assessments/Strategic Environmental Assessment Capacity Building and Waste Management topics are important elements of the REReP Work Plan that have not been activated yet. Therefore, REReP Secretariat asked for feedback/support from participating countries and the donors.

5. Transformation of REReP into RENA

Mr. Claude ROUAM presented the future regional environmental cooperation with the Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries. The successor of REReP, RENA (Regional Environmental Network for Accession) will shift from the reconstruction focus to the strengthening of the EU accession process, adding Turkey as full member. The current programme of regional technical cooperation in the field of environment for the Balkans -REReP- does not cover Turkey and, in addition, there is a need for better response to the requirements resulting from the potential EU membership. The implementation period of REReP in its current format is planned to expire in 2009 and therefore the period 2007-2009 could be optimised as a transitional phase to a wider regional cooperation network encompassing all candidate and potential candidate countries, building on the achievements of REReP but strengthening and reforming its operation in order to better address the challenges of preparing these countries for EU accession. RENA will be financed by IPA funds. The proposed scope of activities is strategic planning of the pre-accession process, public participation (EIA, SEA, Espoo and Aarhus Conventions, etc), climate change: technical assistance for inventory of gas emissions, mitigation and

adaptation measures, etc., capacity building for administrative structures, cross border co-operation (Natura 2000 preparations, Water Framework directive, etc) and streamlining of the environmental investment projects, e.g. project preparation facility. RENA Road Map will be circulated amongst the countries for comments and discussed on the next Task Force Meeting. Active support is needed to make the initiative a full success. A meeting of the SEE ministers of environment is planned for 2009. *(See the presentation in the outcome documents)*

The possible continuation of the Environmental Law Approximation Network (ELAN) under RENA was discussed. As ELAN itself would not be large enough to make a separate cluster, it could be part of the cluster on 'Strategic planning of the pre-accession process including identification of capacity building needs'. Alternatively it could be included within the future scope of an expanded Progress Monitoring.

6. Major developments since the 9th REReP Task Force meeting – challenges faced by countries in the field of environment

The SEE countries presented current challenges and possible solutions in the environmental protection.

Albania has progressed with the waste legislation but there are financial problems to develop the necessary infrastructure that leads to weak enforcement. Joint Ministerial Regulation on the waste management was drafted as well as Instruction on developing Waste Management Plans. Over 10 new laws were adopted. Amendments to existing laws are in process of approval, e.g. Law on Protected Areas, Law on Water resources. National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan were adopted. Key investments in the hot spots were presented. As key challenges were mentioned the strengthening of the environmental institutions, the need for capacity building, more funds for investments, support in developing methodologies and other instruments, public participation. The climate change mitigation and adaptation has to be addressed in the national development strategies with strengthening of the institutions and adopting legislation to get advantage of the carbon finance and flexible mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol.

(See the presentation in the outcome documents)

Croatia aims to fully transpose the environmental acquis by the end of 2008. Among the key challenges were mentioned the waste management, industrial pollution control, investments and absorption of EU funds. The priorities in the waste sector are the remediation and closing down of landfills and “hot spots”, the implementation of the 2007 National Waste Management Plan, the setting up of max 21 waste management centers, the implementation of “polluter pays” principle. In the industrial pollution control the priorities are the harmonization with the IPPC directive and the preparations for investments into BAT. The private sector incentives for cleaner production, awareness raising and the technology upgrade are seen as opportunities to achieve the national goals. The implementation of the heavy investment directives related to wastewater treatment, water supply, waste management, industrial pollution control is seen as a challenge. IPA Operational Programme contains the indicative list of environmental projects in the area of waste and water sectors (Sep 2007). The Kyoto Protocol was ratified in April 2007. National Strategy and Action Plan for meeting the obligations under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol have been drafted. Priority will be given to projects reducing the greenhouse gas emissions, extended use of renewable energy, introducing bio-fuels, improving the energy efficiency in the energy production and construction, use of landfill gas for electricity production.

(See the presentation in the outcome documents)

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the integrated waste management and the transfer of good waste management practices are key challenges in the waste sector. Waste Management Strategy is under development, technical documentation for regional landfills is under preparation and their construction is progressing. The promotion of good waste management practices could take place

through strengthening of the municipal cooperation and capacity and improving the waste management knowledge on central and local level. The exchange of experience, transfer of lessons learned and promotion of PPP could also support this process. The development of secondary legislation is a key challenge in the law drafting. As to the investments the challenges are linked to the preparation and implementation of projects. There is a need of guidelines for project identification and preparation, strengthening the capacity of the institutions to support the investments, training on PRAG and FIDIC procedures. The National Environmental Investment Strategy is under development including project pipeline. The level of domestic and international capital available for environmental infrastructure investments could be increased. Another challenge is the improvement of the public participation in the EIA process. In the climate change field the priorities are linked to the integration of climate change provisions into other relevant policies, e.g. energy, water, agriculture, forestry, transport, and the support for the EU agenda on climate and energy.

In addition, a Joint Statement by the State Secretaries and Heads of Delegations of the Ministries for Environment from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244) and the outcomes of the meeting held in Ohrid on November 23, 2007 was presented. (*See the presentation in the outcome documents*).

Montenegro is in process of establishing a fully operational Environmental Protection Agency. The approximation of the environmental legislation to the EU standards is expected to be finalized by mid 2008 with adoption of three additional laws. The focus for the future will be on drafting secondary legislation, review and improvement of existing laws. In the waste management the priorities cover the finalization of the secondary legislation drafting, appointing competent authorities, e.g. for hazardous waste permitting. Priorities have been also outlined as to the key challenges in the field of investments, EIA and public participation, cross-border cooperation. Among the investment related challenges were mentioned the establishment of coherent and comprehensive information and reporting system for environmental revenues and expenditures for the public and business sector and the households, the development of financing plans based on cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis for the necessary investments, the introduction of revolving fund for financing of environmental investments at municipal level by public authorities. As priorities in addressing the climate change challenge were indicated the preparation of the First National Communication to UNFCCC, the National plan for mitigation of climate change, the National inventory of anthropogenic green house gas emissions by sources and sinks, the development of Action plan for prevention of the causes and mitigation of the negative impacts of climate change, awareness raising measures. New cross-border projects are under preparation for IPA 2008 – II component with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. (*See the presentation in the outcome documents*)

Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244) informed verbally about the progress achieved in harmonization of environmental legislation. Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency (KEPA) is established and Kosovo development Strategy and Action Plan for 2007-2013 are finalized. Kosovo Environmental Action Plan was approved in January 2007 and Investment Plan was prepared for projects in the waste, soil, air sector etc. A range of laws were adopted since the last REReP Task Force meeting, e.g. Environmental Protection Law (new), Law on air protection, Water Law, Law on nature conservation, Waste law, Law on noise protection, Law on protection from ionizing and non-ionizing radiation, Law on Strategic Impact Assessment and Law on Environmental Impact Assessment, but the implementation is still a challenge.

Serbia presented key challenges and possible solutions in several areas. In the waste sector the legislative framework has to be fully harmonized with the EU acquis and the administrative capacity for strategic planning, permitting, and enforcement, especially at local level needs to be strengthened. Investments in waste management infrastructure have to increase. A large number of legal and sub-legal acts still have to be adopted and the time schedule is a challenge. As investment related challenges were mentioned the adoption of legal framework, strengthening of the administrative capacity at central and local level, development of a plan for financing/prioritization of the investments. In the EIA and Public participation field the efforts have to be focused on improving the

administrative capacity at local level, amend the existing legislation and raise the awareness of citizens as to the procedures. The priorities for addressing climate change are to strengthen the administrative capacity, develop and adopt the necessary strategic documents on national level, improve the data collection, establish administrative structures and procedures for implementation of Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM). In order to strengthen the cross-border cooperation a strategy for regional development has to be prepared, the projects at local level have to be prioritised, the administrative structures at local and national level have to be further developed. (*See the presentation in the outcome documents*)

The representatives from Romania and Turkey were given the floor to briefly address the participants.

Mr. Alberto Simion from the Ministry of Environment and Water Management of Romania expressed his satisfaction for Romania participating in the meeting for first time as EU member state. Support could be provided to the SEE countries as it was done within REReP 1.9 project when Romania assisted Croatia in drafting the Law of Air Quality and Protection. Possible areas where Romania could provide best practices are the IPPC Directive, Air Quality, Waste Management, Law on Chemicals and others.

Mr. Recep Sahin, representing the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of Turkey, thanked the European Commission for the opportunity to be present at the REReP Task Force meeting and benefit from the exchange of regional experience. He also expressed his satisfaction with including his country into the new mechanism of RENA. The current role Turkey has is the observing role; however they would like to more actively participate and to be included in REReP activities to prepare for RENA.

Summary of the key challenges in the region and how to address them

Ms. Alessandra PALA, project manager for REReP, REC summarized the country presentations and discussion.

All countries are continuing to advance in the Stabilization and Association Process. As agreed in the previous REReP Task Force meeting, the countries reported on challenges and possible solutions. All countries reached the active transposition phase of the EU acquis. New laws have been (or are going to be) adopted by several countries. The main common SEE challenges can be summarised as follows: the secondary legislation and the implementation and enforcement of the existing legislation; capacity-building and administrative capacity at local and national level; and increase of financing and support to investment preparation.

7. Conclusions of the meeting

Mr. Claude ROUAM presented the conclusions of the meeting, summarised as follows:

- 1). The REReP Work Plan 2007-2009 was endorsed by all the participants.
- 2). In this context, the countries were asked to provide concrete suggestions for two regional workshops on climate change and Natura 2000 and to volunteer for hosting the events – to be sent to REReP TF secretariat by 10 December.
- 3). A road map for RENA should be developed following the outline, which was endorsed by the Ministers of the Candidate Countries and potential Candidate Countries in June. A Commission draft will be distributed for comments in 2008. Draft to reflect:
 - Activities, resulting from the proposed priorities-there must be clear regional benefit and a strategic approach to activity identification.
 - Involvement of stakeholders-IFIs, MSs as appropriate and civil society.

- Streamlining of related activities under different regional initiatives (avoid overlaps, in particular in relation to Project Preparation facilities).
- Clarification on relations to RCC/SEECF.

4). Next REReP TF meeting (October/November 2008):

- To discuss the RENA road map
- Venue of the meeting-any volunteers?
- Useful information provided by the countries should be used in identification of future actions
- Other topics are welcome.

5). Support indicated for the PEIP project, however, there is a need to reflect on:

- Need for case studies to be discussed at the meeting (success stories and lessons learnt); the experience of Romania and Bulgaria is particularly relevant here.
- More information on the user charges in the countries and affordability issues in general-technical assistance might be useful in this regard.
- The selection criteria for the investments prioritization in the context of strategic planning.
- Clear need for capacity building in this sector.

6). In relation to the Law drafting and ELAN, a positive feedback can be noted and a need for continuation, however, there is a need to ensure proper synergies with other activities, such as Progress Monitoring and ECENA.

7). There is a need to optimize use of possibilities under IPA to address challenges that the countries are facing in the field of environment.

8). Need for active support by all the participants to make our joint work a success!

8. Any other business. Date and place of the next meeting.

Mr. Claude ROUAM wrapped up the 10th REReP Task Force meeting by welcoming continuing progress in the region and commitment of the countries to regional cooperation. The next REReP Task Force meeting will be held in the SEE region on a date to be confirmed, preliminarily in October/November 2008. Montenegro volunteered to host the meeting.

Note: The outcome documents from the meeting could be found on the REReP website http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REREP/docs/10th_meeting/documentlist.html