

# Foreword

A number of state-of-the-art information technology (IT) tools have been utilised by governments to enhance citizens' access to environmental information, with the ultimate goals of fostering democracy and improving civil society, and fulfilling international legal obligations and reporting requirements.

The Development of National Environmental Information Systems project, implemented between April 2001 and December 2003, aimed to help countries and territories in South Eastern Europe (SEE) to develop their own environmental information systems.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands funded this project within the framework of the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe (REReP) to encourage the wider use of information technology in processing and disseminating environmental information to the public. The project encourages the exchange of environmental information and experience in building information systems, particularly in the SEE region.

Project activities have taken place in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia (the project's lead country), FYR Macedonia, Romania, and Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo (territory currently under UN interim administration).

This publication serves to share the project's outcomes. Included are overviews of the current status of environmental information systems in each country and identified priorities for future development.

## Project Rationale

The political and economic changes witnessed in these countries during the past 13 years have had a significant impact on the environment. Citizens and governments alike need full access to environmental information to cope with this impact. Such access can improve a government's image in the eyes of its citizens and contribute to greater political transparency and accountability. This project encourages greater public participation in decision making and reinforces a sense of common responsibility for the environment. Complete, reliable and current information is necessary for an in-depth environmental decision making process to take place that involves the public from start to finish. Such information also improves environmental awareness.

The Internet has increased the volume of environmental information that can be collected, processed, stored and disseminated to the general public. Access to modern technology enables people to obtain information online whenever necessary. It has also made it possible to format information to fulfil the particular needs of each individual user. This project aims to harness this technology for the benefit of the region, its citizens and the environment.



Scenes from the wrap-up training workshop hosted in Sofia, Bulgaria, June 19-20, 2008. For a full list of participants and gallery see: [www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REReP/InformationSystems/](http://www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REReP/InformationSystems/)

