

Kosovo – Country Report



Kosovo is under the civil authority of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and is effectively a UN protectorate. UNMIK is authorized to exercise ultimate legislative and executive powers. Following the first general elections in December 2001, a provisional self-government was established in March 2002. Kosovo today remains nominally a province of the Republic of Serbia, within Serbia and Montenegro. The Department of Environmental Protection established by UNMIK in May 2000 as the institution responsible for environmental protection is now part of the government's Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning. The department today incorporates several scientific institutions that were active in environmental monitoring prior to the conflict.

1. Key Findings

- Many monitoring stations exist, but their operation yields data of limited value, and which is analysed on an ad-hoc basis
- From 2003 a new Environmental Protection Agency will ensure comprehensive and systematic data collection, and foster cooperation through a monthly newsletter, website and regular state of the environment report
- Ninety percent of NGOs feel the relevant authorities do not adequately respond to their requests, and called for better electronic dissemination of information, preparation of reports and surveys, and weekly news updates, including details on pending decisions.
- Technical upgrades to monitoring equipment, capacity building for environmental communication, new standards and international cooperation are future priorities

2. Current Status of Environmental Information Systems

Data Collection and Management

The Hydro-Meteorological Institute (now part of the Department of Environmental Protection) is chiefly responsible for the monitoring of natural resources (air, water and soil) and enforcing protective measures. Respective information is collected through 132 measuring stations, with rainfall monitored at 33 stations, and river pollution at 22 stations. The Institute of Public Health also monitors the quality of air and water. Drinking water samples were taken from 904 locations in 2000, for example, and tested for heavy metals, bacterial content and chemical content. The Institute for Nature and

Environmental Protection (also part of the Department of Environmental Protection) is responsible for nature conservation, including the monitoring and protection of natural areas and biodiversity.

In spite of these activities, there is limited coherency and a formal monitoring network does not exist. The various agencies collect data individually, but this is neither systematic nor complete, and the flow of information from the local to the central level has still to be improved. Data is often found to be overlapping and/or incompatible. However, with the endorsement of the Environmental Protection Law in 2003, a central authority, the Kosovo Environmental Protection Agency has now been legally founded to coordinate environmental monitoring, including the gathering of data and its dissemination. All existing institutes will be integrated into this agency, (though as of June 2003 it had yet to become operational). There all environmental information will be shared and exchanged.

Interagency Cooperation

[The agency will be supported by a GIS unit], located within the environment ministry, to store all the gathered data electronically. The data currently collected is analysed on a case-by-case basis, but in time will be more systematically assessed. The GIS unit is intended to become the ministry's main information management division, which will also serve other ministries and governmental institutions requiring environmental information, for instance the water ministry.

The Statistical Institute of Kosovo also keeps statistics on various elements and trends relevant to the environment, relying on data collected through its own surveys and based on enterprise self-reporting. The institute publishes a printed report every six months.

Public Accessibility

The new Environmental Protection Law governs public access to information and calls within one year for state of the environment data, pollutant emissions, and official roles and responsibilities to be made available: in both electronic and hardcopy formats; within two months of any request being submitted; and in lieu of any environmental decisionmaking processes.

The environment ministry formerly published a weekly magazine called the "Environmental Monitor." This was abandoned due to the lack of relevant data, however, a monthly printed publication is planned that will contain relevant environmental information, activity reports of ministries and institutes etc. and will be distributed to various institutions operating in Kosovo. This will be followed by the creation of a tri-lingual website available in English, Albanian and Serbian.

As of 2003, regular reports on the state of the environment are being published, the first in April. In addition, in April 2003 the Department of Environmental Protection published a complete state of the environment report which has been distributed in hardcopy to all relevant stakeholders and published on the UNEP.net environmental portal website. The department has also prepared a 'Cadastre of Pollutants' which contains information on emitted pollutants in Kosovo. Postal and telephone enquiries on environmental issues are also handled by the environment department, although more

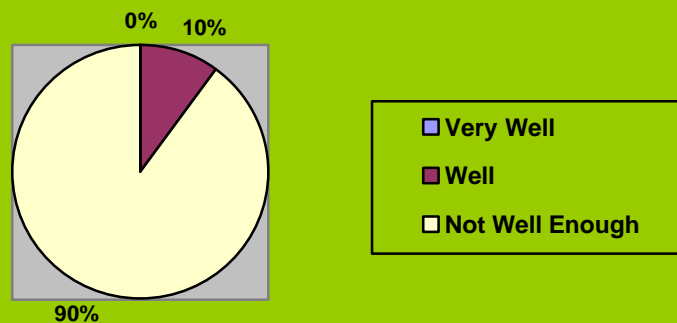
commonly citizens and NGOs approach the Ministry through written petitions and in-person.

Other government institutions (such as those listed above) publish environmental data in the form of regular reports and ad-hoc studies, but typically only in printed format, due to the lack of equipment for electronic distribution. Multinational and non-governmental organisations operating in Kosovo also play a key role in disseminating information on the environment, including the Humanitarian Community Information Center (HCIC), the Regional Environmental Center (REC) Kosovo Field Office, and Oxfam.

What NGOs had to say about the usefulness, accessibility and reliability of official environmental information

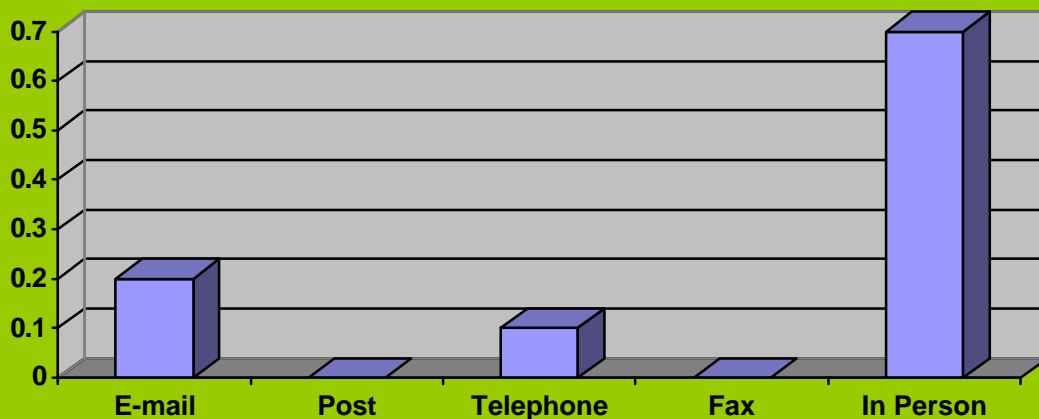
NGOs depend on government bodies for current and reliable environmental information. Of the 20 that were surveyed, 65 percent have requested information from a relevant ministry or authority, and average three requests per year. Ten percent of the NGOs surveyed indicated they have paid for environmental information, but only the expected processing fees.

Ninety percent of NGOs felt, however, that the relevant authorities are not adequately responding to their requests (see pie chart below). In spite of friendly staff, only 35 percent said that responses are generally provided in time, while another 35 percent indicated responses often never arrive. The same number of NGOs (35 percent) claimed to have been denied information at least once, having been told the main reasons were the lack of the requested information, or that insufficient human resources were available to handle the request.



When asked in 2003 about the range of topics and documentation available, no NGOs expressed dissatisfaction. However, they did state their interest in having better access to summary reports on the environment and environmental impact assessments, and information on decisionmaking processes, as well as data on biodiversity, water quality information and industrial emissions. Regarding quality, seventy-five percent felt information was somewhat up-to-date, but that overall its usefulness varied. Suggestions for improvements included more electronic dissemination of information, preparation of reports and surveys, and publication by environmental experts and professional publishers. Weekly updates of information were welcomed by three quarters of the NGOs who responded.

Regarding the methods used to request environmental information, the following chart shows an overwhelming majority (70 percent) make their enquiries in person. Interestingly, 20 percent of respondents also depend on email to communicate with authorities.



3. Obstacles and Challenges for the Future

Environment-related government institutions and civil society are still in their infancy, as most post-war effort has been directed at rebuilding the physical infrastructures and basic social institutions (chiefly through UNMIK). While the environmental administration in Kosovo is now established, it is far from satisfactory, and constrained by a lack of proper equipment, and educated and experienced staff.

UNMIK is in the process of transformation; the work of the environmental department is re-focusing toward environmental management and decision making, and its capacity must be enhanced, for instance with respect to applying techniques that ensure transparency and public awareness of official activities (in line with the new environmental protection law). The foreseen reduction of the international personnel of UNMIK and other institutions will mean much information and experience will be lost, unless adequate mechanisms are in place to ensure the necessary know-how transfer. It remains a challenge to find capable staff, though the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at Prishtina University is bridging this gap by training environmental professionals in areas such as environmental management, ecology and GIS.

Efforts to establish and maintain a functioning system for environmental information exchange and management begin from a very weak foundation. A limited legal framework does not clearly define responsibilities and procedures and is poorly enforced. Environmental monitoring is poorly coordinated, reporting is unobjective, and pulling disparate data together under an integrated information system will pose a considerable challenge. Practically whole new entities and institutions must be built around limited technical capacities, know-how, and financial resources.

International reporting obligations are vague, owing to Kosovo's legal status, and this does not release the necessary funding and or expertise that could contribute improvements to environmental assessment. Domestic funding is limited, and the environmental department remains dependent on grants and assistance from external bodies. The lack of coordination of international efforts, and the piecemeal nature of funding, may result in delays, overlapping of work and disparate decision-making.

4. Needs and Priorities

Technical infrastructure is needed to ensure the systematic and objective collection of water pollutant data for selected key health-related areas. This can be temporarily realised through the use of mobile laboratories. A joint project between the World Health Organisation and the Department of Environment, for instance has successfully sampled environmental factors related to health in Mitrovica via mobile stations. The extension of such approaches throughout Kosovo is necessary, particularly where hotspots exist in Obilic and Trepca. Both hardware and software to properly process, store and interpret data also needs to be invested in. GIS plays an important role in the data analysis of the impacts of pollution in Mitrovica, and the purchase and deployment of such equipment would benefit the central administration in systematically analysing environmental status.

Institutional strengthening must also incorporate investment in human resources. To effectively utilise modern technology, the environment department and ministry need to depend on staff trained to interpret environmental data and generate useful information.

At the same time, new **products and services** must be developed, including education and information programs to ensure environmental awareness and society's cooperation in addressing environmental problems. The new monthly environmental newsletter needs to be sustainable, and environmental information centres should be established in Kosovo's five regions.

New **legal frameworks** and standards are required to harmonise approaches to data collection, ensure complementarity of the results, and enable exchange and cooperation. This will reinforce the value of a centralised data storage system, and the consequent publishing of environmental status reports.

International cooperation with government agencies and organisations outside Kosovo, particularly other South Eastern European governments, is also important in ensuring international complementarity of data, integration in international reporting regimes besides know-how transfer and experience exchange.

Further details on priorities and foreseen actions are detailed in the National Action Plan included overleaf which was drafted by the REReP 1.8 project team.

Kosovo – Action Plan for National Environmental Information Systems Development
(prepared by Frank Eibish, UNIMK, Blerim Vela, REC Field Office, Bleron Limani, NGO representative)

PRIORITY NEEDS	CURRENT STATUS	FORESEEN ACTIONS	EXPECTED BENEFITS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS	REQUIRED RESOURCES	MATCHING RESOURCES	TIME-LINE
Institutional establishment of environmental information system	Limited monitoring, data exchange, assessment and dissemination Basic legal framework endorsed Establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency still pending	Training on law enforcement measures Strengthening monitoring networks Improving capacity to interpret and report environmental data Effective dissemination	Effective environmental reporting	Compliance with legal frameworks Regular environmental reporting and publicly accessible information Functioning Environmental Protection Agency	Training and expertise in network management, law enforcement Equipment and specific training on data interpretation and standards Opportunities for regional networking	REReP 1.7 REReP 2.2 'Rehabilitation of Hydro-Meteorological Network' and 'Institutional building of the environment ministry' projects Italian government: 'Improving environmental quality in Kosovo'	2004
Legal framework	Environmental Framework Law encompassing information access adopted in No laws or standards governing monitoring and reporting though the environment ministry is now entitled to issue standards	Extension of legal framework including standards for data collection	Clear and applicable standards Societal awareness of environmental issues and involvement in decision making	Legal compliance Timely responses to requests (#) Public involvement in decisionmaking processes	Expertise in environmental law application and enforcement and corresponding financial resources	REReP 1.7 REReP 2.3 Local budget Other international projects	End of 2003
Data collection and management	No regulation of the monitoring system No systematic, objective data collection	Design monitoring network, define objectives Report on environmental hotspots, gather health related data Establish procedures for the	Improved availability of relevant data	Regularity of data for key issues Exchange of data Reliable inputs for	Expertise for the set-up of monitoring networks Financial resources for monitoring	REReP 1.8 Other international projects	2004

		effective exchange of data		environmental reporting	equipment		
Information dissemination	<p>Many printed publications, but of low quality</p> <p>First State of Environment Report published in April 2003</p> <p>Pilot local environmental information Web page (portal) [under construction]</p>	<p>Incorporation of already collected data in to useful publications</p> <p>Preparation for regular state of the environment reporting</p> <p>[Completion] of environmental web portal</p>	<p>Higher public awareness and involvement in decisionmaking issues</p> <p>Improved decision-making</p>	<p>Regular publication of collected data</p> <p>Regular publication of a state of the environment report (long-term)</p>	Financial resources for software [and publishing]	REReP 1.8, REReP 1.15 REReP 2.3 local REC Field Office projects	End of 2003
Use of environmental information in policy and decision-making	High demand for environmental information for these purposes, but low supply	<p>Generation of state of the environment reports as input to policy planning</p> <p>Creation of multi-stakeholder forum for discussion of environmental concerns in policy and decision-making</p>	<p>Improved communication and flow of information among authorities</p> <p>Better integration of environmental considerations into authorities' decisions</p>	Improved understanding of environmental problems among authorities	Human resources Printer	REReP 1.15 REReP 2.3	2004

REReP 1.6: Continuation of Environmental Monitoring and Assessment in Bosnia and Herzegovina and FYR Macedonia and Extension to Croatia

REReP 1.7: Strengthening National Environmental Protection Agencies and their Inspectorates in the South Eastern European Region

REReP 1.8: Developing National Environmental Information Systems in the SEE Countries

REReP 1.15: Regional Environmental Information Portal for South Eastern Europe

REReP 2.2: Support Developing Strategies for Implementation of the Aarhus Convention in South Eastern Europe

REReP 2.3: Promoting Networking and Cooperation of Environmental NGOs: Establishment of Electronic Computer Networks on a National and Regional Level

Case Study on Donor Funding

Objectives

Seed funding from the Netherlands's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was invested in equipment for water analysis, and on training on the use of this equipment. The equipment purchased included photometers, spectrophotometers, and a mobile monitoring instrument for use in the rapid determination of six key parameters (TSS, COD, BOD, TOC, NO₃ without reagents). The equipment was provided to the Hydro-Meteorological Institute which is chiefly responsible for the monitoring of natural resources. The equipment ensures the accessibility of key environmental data, which will help initiate the further development of the environmental information system in Kosovo.

To ensure the effective use of these instruments, the manager of the KHMI laboratory was trained for two weeks in the firm "Behr Labor Technik" GMBh, based in Düsseldorf, Germany through which the analytical equipment was also procured. The manager of the KHMI laboratory was trained on the application of water testing methodologies and equipment usage, and received a comprehensive manual. The training enabled him to train the rest of the KHMI laboratory employees on the use of this equipment.

Expenditures

ITEM	SUM (Eur)
Equipment	26,009
Trainings	1,791
TOTAL	27,800

Benefits

The equipment and training enabled the Hydro-Meteorological Institute to initiate development of the monitoring system in Kosovo, taking into consideration the use of modern technology as well as applying new methodologies for gathering and processing data related to the monitoring of water quality. The equipment ensures the accuracy of water quality measurements, as well as timeliness and cost effectiveness. The new technology used is thus contributing to the reliability and accuracy of the data for the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, and for its subsequent dissemination to the general public and media.

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