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## Zagreb hazardous waste incinerator leaves toxic legacy

Five years after the 2002 fire that ended the operation of the PUTO hazardous waste incinerator in the Croatian capital, this November it was discovered that 250 tonnes of extremely toxic ash were still lying untouched and unprotected on the site. The finding revealed once again the inability of the Croatian authorities to effectively deal with pollution incidents and highlighted the potential hazards of the planned new 385 000 tonne-per-year Zagreb municipal waste incinerator, which may be financed by the European Investment Bank.

The notorious story of the PUTO hazardous waste incinerator began in 1998 after the EBRD-financed rehabilitation of the Jakuševac city landfill started. PUTO was built to incinerate hazardous waste being removed from the landfill during the rehabilitation, but was not considered part of the rehabilitation project and was not subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment.

From the beginning of PUTO's operation, local people complained of health problems which they attributed to the incinerator, including hormonal disorders, indigestion and breathing difficulties, and they claim that life expectancy in the area decreased, while cases of cancer increased. [1] During operation of the plant several incidents occurred and in 2001 its PCDD/PCDF (dioxins and furans) emissions were measured twice

and were above the legal limit of 0.1 ng I-TEQ-1 both times. [2] The Environmental Inspectorate started a number of legal proceedings against PUTO during 2000 and 2001, related to emissions and hazardous waste storage. [3] In March 2002 the Inspectorate threatened to prohibit the further admission of waste if the storage area was not upgraded to comply with regulations. [4]

In August 2002, a major fire broke out in a storage area, about 100 tonnes of hazardous waste burned and the incinerator was finally banned from operating.

However local people feel that their concerns relating to the impact of pollution on their health have been ignored, and they still have no information about the chemicals they were exposed to and about their likely effects.

This November it was revealed that significant levels of PCBs had been found in soil, water and air near the former incinerator site and the Croatian public health office also finally admitted that there may have been pollution from the 2002 fire because dioxins and furans were produced during the combustion of chemicals. In spite of the presence of these Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) which are restricted under the Stockholm Convention, neither the Croatian national implementation plan for the Stockholm convention nor the National waste management plan mentions the site as a "POPs hotspot", in spite of the presence of 250 tonnes of POPs-contaminated ashes.

The Ministry of the Environment has been aware of this issue since 2004 but failed to solve the problem, even though it is legally responsible for hazardous waste. The Ministry's inspectorate only vaguely warned the "Eko Tehning" company to solve the issue, and failed to take action for 3 years instead of dealing with the problem itself and recovering the costs later. After media pressure and NGO warnings, the Ministry of the Environment finally gave 19th November as the deadline for clearing the site of highly contaminated ash.

PUTO incinerator caused health and environmental impacts during its operation, and during the fire, and is today still causing damage from its improperly stored filter residuals. The five years of incompetence by the Ministry of the Environment and City of Zagreb in dealing with the decommissioning of PUTO should act as a strong warning that another incinerator in Zagreb is likely to lead to a whole new catalogue of disasters.

[1] Tesic, Mladenka, Interview with Members of UZOJ - Jakuševac Association for Environmental Protection, Zagreb, 2004

[2] National implementation plan for Stockholm convention page 63.

[3] Buksa, Z.: 'Ekoinspekcija upozoravala i tuzila ali bez koristi', Vjesnik, 02.08.2002

[4] Buksa, Z.: 'Ekoinspekcija upozoravala i tuzila ali bez koristi', Vjesnik, 02.08.2002

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## **Bourgas - Alexandroupolis Oil Pipeline: Death With a Breath of Oil**

People in Bourgas and the surrounding region are aware that the installation of an oil terminal (or two) in the Bay of Bourgas would be a dead-end for the area. However, until recently, very few of them have been willing to speak out in public on the problem. From one side the "I'm too small to make a change" thinking is still widespread. From the other, the City Council, that should co-ordinate and lead a debate on the pros and cons of the pipeline projects has stayed silent, thus leaving citizens alone against the decisions of the Bulgarian government and growing pressure from Russia to push the project ahead. However, this may be about to change.

The Bourgas - Alexandroupolis oil pipeline, with a total capacity of some 50 million tonnes of crude oil, is officially aimed at reducing the environmental danger caused by tankers in the Bosphorus Straits. However Bulgarian and international institutions are silent about the new risks that project would bring - risks for people and for the environment. The fact that no environmental and social impact assessments were carried out before the heads of Russia, Bulgaria and Greece signed a tri-lateral Agreement for the construction of the pipeline on March 15, 2007 in Athens, Greece, makes the situation even more confusing, as people have no idea what they should expect.

The pipeline would cause much more problems for people and the environment than people in Bourgas could imagine. While they are understandably focused on their own upcoming troubles - heavy pollution of the Bay, the death of the fishing industry and decline of tourism, environmentalists see much wider problems.

An analysis done by the Green Policy Institute, a Bulgarian environmental and development think-tank, shows that the tri-lateral Agreement, which has since been ratified by all three Parliaments, already imposes environmental, economic, social and political risks for Bulgaria. The Agreement fails to provide strong environmental and social safeguards, and opens the doors for corporate welfare schemes in order to "make the project competitive". In other words Bulgaria may be forced to impose a number of tax and duties exemptions to decrease the operational costs of the project operating company, which will be under Russian control (51% of the shares).

The fact that several oil pipeline projects are planned in the region means that the supply of oil for the pipeline is not unsure, which also leads to uncertainty about the project's competitiveness, and also bodes ill for Bulgaria's public finances. The hot debate here is how the project operator's costs would be compensated from the transit taxes - prior to the state fees being paid or afterwards.

Concerning the environment, the Black sea would be extremely endangered by the increased tanker traffic. This would increase the risks of a catastrophe, having in mind that the tankers would then be over 100 000 tonnes. The recent catastrophe in the Kerch Strait shows how little the governments in the region are

ready to learn from past mistakes. Even the European Commission, usually regarded as "the biggest pro-environmental proponent" by people in the region, has failed to react to the pollution of the Black Sea. The selected technology selected for unloading the oil in Bourgas (Single Point/Buoy Mooring) is also associated with almost continuous oil leakages that will speed up pollution problems within the Bay of Bourgas.

The pipeline will also destroy or put in danger a number of protected natural areas. In Bulgaria it would influence negatively some 10 Natura 2000 zones, including very important zones on the bird migration route Via Pontica. A major accident would kill tens of thousands of birds and would render lakes and lagunas virtually dead. Even so-called technical leakages would be problematic for the flora and fauna of the Bay of Bourgas and the nearest protected areas.

The least recognised problem should be more than obvious - new pipelines increase Greenhouse Gas emissions. The oil will be burned somewhere on this planet, and Bulgarians should not use the fact that it is not on our territory as an excuse to escape responsibility.

The list of other problems continues, associated with the bad economics of the project, negative influence on the state budget of Bulgaria, Russian political control of the project's development, the potential involvement of military troops, blocked access to the land nearest to the pipeline, etc.

Is there any hope? Perhaps so - it seems that the second reason for the silence from the people of Bourgas is over - the town has a new Mayor and a new majority in the City Council. Both have already declared they will work to make a local referendum on the pipeline soon, which was previously stopped by the previous political architecture of the City. Would it be enough to stop the danger? Definitely not, however this would give a strong signal to the government and IFIs (so far only the EIB has shown an interest in financing the Greek part of the pipeline), that citizens do not agree to becoming the next victims of Russian energy roulette in the Balkans.

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## SEEDW presents: "Real Energy Security Is Staring Us In The Face - Renewable energy case studies from South East Europe"

SEEDW has just launched its new collection of case studies providing a quick snapshot of renewable energy projects in south-east Europe. The case studies are aimed at financial institutions, decision-makers and NGOs, and show not only the good examples that have been implemented, but also indicate the barriers which remain to the widespread replication of the projects.

With a host of fossil fuel and nuclear projects currently being proposed across the region, sustainable energy initiatives have a difficult time reaching the general public. While international financial flows generally follow the bigger, "easier-to-handle" projects, unfortunately only small drops are adding up to create a renewable energy and energy efficiency future.



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It is beyond argument that renewable energy has much lower environmental and social impacts than other energy sources. The only issue remaining is how much it costs. Technologies have evolved to compete with fossil fuel and nuclear energy if life cycle analyses and the externalities of energy production and consumption are considered.

The case studies presented in "Real Energy Security Is Staring Us In The Face" show that renewable energy can have a significant role in lowering budgets for electricity, heating and hot water. Technologies have evolved both in terms of efficiency and control/monitoring, requiring little intervention from the owner. Commercial loans for renewable energy projects developed by municipalities have contributed to the sector's growth, but the experience so far with such loans is limited (in some countries it may take years to obtain a loan).

Collaboration between public authorities and the private sector in renewable energy projects is also proving to be successful. Yet it can sometimes be difficult to start up renewable energy projects in the public sector, due to a low level of awareness, a lack of any promotion or incentive systems and serious administrative barriers (such as regulations on connection to the grid, lack of implementing regulations and lengthy permitting procedures). These projects are sometimes part of bigger packages that include energy efficiency measures, which can be there primarily to improve public acceptance for technologies that may seem new, economically risky, costly, or to increase project economic rate of return and achieve higher energy savings. In the end, clear economic advantages are a positive driving force for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.

Renewable energy projects involve a switch away from fossil fuel, with the associated environmental and health benefits, namely reduced greenhouse gases and other pollutant emissions. The social benefits come in a wide range, from providing basic services to lower prices per unit of energy. Tangible economic, environmental and social results generally appear shortly after project commissioning and it can take a few years for the news to spread and replication initiatives to appear. Of course, it always helps to have a framework, a regional or national scheme playing an active role in promoting and funding renewable energy and energy efficiency projects (either national

promotion schemes or international schemes, such as emission trading and joint implementation).

Biomass and wind are generally seen to have much more potential than solar photovoltaic at the moment. Photovoltaics are still relatively expensive, and together with a lack or insufficiency of promotion schemes, the development of the sector is currently restricted. Nevertheless solar photovoltaics already offer benefits across south-east Europe, particularly in isolated sites and for those wishing to have an independent power supply.

Besides low cost and clean energy, biomass projects bring a series of benefits that are not highly visible to the public. These include: sanitary cleaning of forests (preventing the dissemination of tree diseases), a reduction in methane emissions (avoiding decomposition of organic matter) and a reduction in soil and water pollution (the use of wood waste from wood processing companies).

Wind power is on the rise as a "new power source" in south-east Europe, as the costs per unit of installed capacity have decreased. Foreign investors are showing substantial interest in the market, but problems persist with access to information on procedures and local potential. Wind power can have certain negative effects if projects are not sited appropriately, the same as with hydro power or any type of industrial project.

A mix of energy sources and technologies can be used at the household level to cover energy demand partially or entirely. Such systems are designed according to local potential, and they include a mix of solar, wind, hydro and biomass technologies.

Renewable energy technologies vary in terms of efficiency and environmental acceptability. Each individual project design should, therefore, be screened against alternatives to identify the most suitable technology for each specific application. In the project development stage, the same significance needs to be given to social and environmental aspects as to technical, economic and financial aspects and the assessment needs to cover the full range of policy, programme, and project options. Strategic impact assessments and life cycle analyses need to be integrated and undertaken as an initial step in the process and give demand-side options the same

significance as supply options. Renewable energy must be supported in order to enter energy markets, but any such support must be limited to renewable energy that is produced in sustainable ways.

Renewable energy projects should be considered within a framework for sustainable development that integrates energy demand reduction and efficiency, a mix of renewable energy sources to meet an increasing proportion of overall energy demand and the protection of communities and biodiversity.

For more information about the case studies, or to order hard copies, please contact Ionut Apostol, [ionut \(at\) bankwatch.org](mailto:ionut(at)bankwatch.org)

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## Civil Society Meeting on Oil Pipelines to Take Place in 2008

After September's gathering of civil society organizations in Sisak, Croatia, to establish cooperation on addressing the environmental and social impacts of oil pipeline development, a need has been identified for civil society to continue discussions on specific threatening projects in the region.

In order to continue building cooperation, SEEDW is organising a meeting where representatives of civil society organisations will discuss strategies around the two oil pipelines most promoted by the oil industry - the Bourgas-Alexandroupolis and AMBO (Albanian



Peshiti Gorge, one of the valuable natural areas threatened by the AMBO pipeline

Macedonian Bulgarian) pipeline. Studies on the construction of these pipelines have shown significant threats from the increased risk of oil spills in Bourgas Gulf area, the pipelines crossing protected natural areas, seismic activity on the pipeline routes and the fact that there has been significant public opposition to the Vlora oil complex in Albania.

The meeting is expected to take place in Macedonia, in mid February 2008. Interested civil society organisations planning to work more closely on the issue of pipelines and coming from affected areas are encouraged to apply for participation at the meeting by sending a request by email to [ana \(at\) bankwatch.org](mailto:ana(at)bankwatch.org). More information about the meeting will soon be published on [www.seedw.org](http://www.seedw.org).

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## Albania at the crossroads - how the IFIs could be doing so much more

*The investment climate in Albania that suffered a depression following the failure of fraudulent pyramid schemes in 1997 has been recovering. Assisted by political stability and Albanian's gearing up to join the European Union, the transforming Albanian market has provided lucrative business opportunities for foreign investors as well as the international financial institutions (IFIs). However, the history of several IFI-financed projects in the county of Vlora shows that the multilateral financiers might not be ready to play the role of international standards' setters able to adequately cope with the post-communist legacy and new realities in the country.*

In recent years structural reforms and the privatisation of strategic business sectors have brought foreign direct investment and the explosion of green-field projects in Albania. These developments have been regarded favourably by the IFIs who, since they started operating in the country at the beginning of the 1990s, have advocated for tight fiscal policies and support for private enterprise as ways of achieving successful transition and economic growth in Albania.

As an indication of the growing trust in Albania's reforms, three IFIs - the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) - have



provided individual or joint financing for large energy and infrastructure projects, the principal one being the EUR 100 million loan for the Vlora thermo power plant where construction started this summer.

In parallel with the project's launching, the EBRD and World Bank's redress bodies have investigated complaints from Vlora citizens about the project's harmful effects. The banks have been criticised for failing to ensure a proper environmental assessment of the project. Among other things, the complainants have raised the plant's siting at a recreational beach, the potential negative impacts on the local tourist and fishing industry and central government's bypassing of public opinion during the consultation process. The Vlora power plant together with two other controversial projects in Vlora county - the Petrolifera hydrocarbons terminal currently seeking financing from the EBRD and the Levan-Vlora road that has received support from the EBRD and EIB - thus stands as a worrying backdrop to future IFI activities in Albania.

### Getting it wrong in Vlora

Political life in Albania has been polarised by a vigorous clash between the Socialist and Democratic parties. As a result of this struggle for state power, representatives of the Albanian central and local governments often oppose projects launched by their

political predecessors. During the election campaign, the Democratic Party's current prime minister Berisha promised to oppose the construction of the thermo power plant, a hydrocarbons terminal and other components of an energy and industry park in Vlora that was initiated by his predecessor from the Socialist Party, Fatos Nano.

Given the strong resistance in Vlora, as well as domestic political pressure that such a position provoked as many regions still have to endure less than seven hours of electricity a day, and also in view of the expected pressure from international actors such as the IMF and the possible international court charges brought by the foreign investor, Berisha backed down and found a "middle way" of keeping the thermo power plant and the terminal in Vlora while transferring other energy projects to the north of the country.

The rivalry between the two parties has caused frequent staff changes in public administration. The merger between the party and the state has in turn weakened the capacities of local and central governments to function as democratic and transparent institutions that are in any way motivated to provide the public with access to information and legal procedures.

After an investigation into the Vlora citizens' complaint about the lack of opportunities for voicing their concerns about the thermo power plant, in June this year the UN Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee issued a ruling that the Albanian government had failed to comply with international requirements for public participation over the project. But nor have the IFIs acted as guarantors of public access to environmental information and participation in decision-making in this case or in other Vlora-based projects either. In the case of the environmental assessment process for the four lane road from Levan to Vlore, the EBRD was not able to ensure that the two leading civil society stakeholders in Vlora - the Civic Alliance for the Protection of the Vlora Bay and the Civil Society Development Centre - were informed about the EIA process and invited on time to participate in consultations.

In 2004 the Albanian parliament approved the concession for the Italian company La Petrolifera Italo Rumena to construct and operate a hydrocarbons terminal in the vicinity of the thermo power plant in Vlora. The approval came only after charges of corruption connected with the project had prolonged the debate in the parliament.

According to Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index Albania ranked at the 111 place among 163 countries reflecting the negative corruption situation in the country. Corruption in Albania is endemic, covering petty corruption practices as well as state capture and the involvement of senior government officials and politicians in fraudulent activities. It is therefore difficult to believe that the IFIs could operate in Albania without addressing corruption and weak governance. Yet there is no public documentation on concrete anti-corruption procedures that the IFIs may or may not use during the course of preparing and implementing projects in the country.

### **Civil society faces a brick wall**

In October this year, the state Central Electoral Committee rejected on formal grounds a request for a referendum on the Petrolifera hydrocarbons terminal originating from the City Council in Vlora. The Committee gave the same negative irrevocable ruling to a request for a local plebiscite on the Vlora power plant delivered by 14,000 Vlora citizens in 2005. Apart from the two requests for a referendum, Vlora citizens have submitted several charges to Albanian courts

against legal violations involving energy projects, yet they claim there is little prospect of positive outcomes.

With little legal redress available, the Vlora project opponents led by the Civic Alliance for the Protection of the Vlora Bay announced their determination to head to the streets until the central government nullifies its approval for the oil terminal. In November Vlora's students reacted with a protest to an attempt to call a public meeting over the terminal, throwing eggs and diesel at Petrolifera's representative. The protest saw the arrest of one of the student leaders.

The recent developments reflect general widespread distrust in the governing authorities as well as doubts about the effectiveness and impartiality of the judicial system. In 2008 the World Bank's Inspection Panel and the EBRD's Independent Recourse Mechanism will probably issue final verdicts on the complaints raised against the Vlora thermo power plant. These will show how effectively the IFI appeal mechanisms are able to act if the national level redress bodies are so immune to complaints from project-affected citizens.

In spite of wildcat housing construction happening along the coast, pieces of pristine Adriatic and Ionian coast are still preserved. Even though the beauties of the picturesque Vlora Bay are widely renowned, the thermo power plant made its way to the town because of the proximity to existing infrastructure and other mostly economic and logistic reasons - tourist development in the city, the local fishing industry and questions about the overall economic profitability of the project were overlooked. Years of protests by the Civic Alliance for the Protection of the Vlora Bay and local businesses are evidence that Albanian civil society has reclaimed its right to co-decide about types of development and ways to ensure a healthy environment.

Albania has relatively good environmental legislation, yet its enforcement has been weak particularly due to the lack of capacity of environmental assessment and inspection bodies. Could the IFIs pick up the slack and play a strengthening role in EIA and monitoring processes? The IFIs are certainly not performing such a role automatically - an EIA quality control on biodiversity for the Levan-Vlora road came only after local civil society representatives expressed their concerns about mitigation measures along the road section neighbouring the Narta lagoon.

### Transition or more despair?

During Prime Minister Berisha's October visit to London, EBRD president Jean Lemierre expressed an interest in supporting the construction of two to three new cement plants in Kruja, despite protests from the environmental movement and the Socialist party that the project will violate environmental standards, pollute the air and that two plants only will destroy 240 hectares of forest. A month later, the EBRD announced that it plans to invest more than EUR 120 million next year into Albanian energy and infrastructure projects.

There is no doubt that the Albanian private sector is in need of a boost and infrastructure such as road and railway networks and electricity supply require expansion. However, the IFIs cannot continue to operate in the country without addressing the generic causes of corruption, as well as promoting the reform of public administration and the judicial system.

The IFIs should be actively living up to their role as standard setters, keenly alive to the need for the proper assessment and monitoring of projects that they help finance, including open access to environmental information and opportunities for inclusive public engagement. The international banks should not forget that effective transition in one of the poorest countries in Europe will not happen ultimately without special support being given to education, health and rural development.

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### Roma inclusion in Serbia

Stevan Nikolic is head of the Subotica-based Roma Educational Centre ([www.ec-roma.org.yu](http://www.ec-roma.org.yu)), which has been working on Roma education and social, cultural and economic inclusion for more than 10 years. He is also a representative of Roma from the Subotica Region in the National Council of Roma and as such participates in work relating to the inclusion of Roma on the regional, provincial and national level.

We met with Mr. Nikolic at a very sensitive time, when the preparation period for the resettlement of the informal slum settlement underneath the "Gazela" Bridge in Belgrade is taking place - supported by the European Investment Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and European

Agency for Reconstruction - and aimed to get his insights into the challenges faced by the process and its importance in the wider inclusion of Roma in Serbia.

### How do you see the general situation with Roma inclusion in Serbia today?

The situation is complicated. Despite the existence of Roma political parties, the representation of Roma within other political parties, the existence of the National Council of Roma, and a number of Roma and Roma-focused NGOs, real work on the inclusion of Roma in the educational, social, economic and political system is just beginning. The clearest sign of the lack of political will of other actors is that despite the initiative of the OECD to finance the establishment of Roma coordinators within local authorities and cities only Sombor, Leskovac, Pirot and Belgrade have taken this opportunity. Other cities are using project-based financing, which is not sustainable.

Another very negative process is the expulsion from their EU homes of around 100 000 Serbian citizens who have been working for long periods in "old" EU countries, and their return to Serbia. Around half of these people are Roma. Their return has provoked some towns (Senta and Subotica in North Vojvodina) to formally declare their refusal accept them in order to 'protect the national and political balance'. This rejection of returning people can unfortunately awkwardly influence successfully-started processes in some Serbian communities, and may adversely affect some important projects such as the "Gazela" resettlement, "assistance in schools" project, and various projects for the economic inclusion of Roma.

The inclusion of Roma in education is - despite successful examples in some places (such as Subotica) - at the very beginning. We need an enormous effort by institutions at all levels, strengthening of Roma NGOs as the most important mediators, deeper involvement of the media in the fight against prejudices and stereotypes, and special budget lines at all levels for financial support for the economic and social inclusion of Roma. Last but not least, we need huge cultural and moral changes and a long period for individual change and acceptance of different people.

### **How do you see the situation within Roma political institutions?**

Roma political parties are for the first time in Serbian Parliament and have started to advocate for direct measures for improvement of life of Roma. The National Council of Roma is unfortunately in crisis due to internal struggles for better positions and control over the financial means from the Serbian budget and international financing. Unfortunately the National Council is often circumvented by some of its members regarding important and expensive projects, thus raising the logical question of corruption and misuse of funds. One of these cases is unfortunately the "Gazela" project for the resettlement of the slum "village" underneath the Gazela Bridge in Belgrade. Suspensions around this project are expressed repeatedly within the Serbian Media and in some sessions of the National Parliament without proper (or any) response from the Belgrade Roma Coordination Centre or city authorities.

### **What would you see as a successfully planned and implemented inclusion process?**

First of all, people are usually afraid of the unknown. Therefore it is not surprising that some local authorities are refusing to accept the new incoming population expelled from the EU.

There are multiple closely-linked levels of inclusion: social, economic, political and cultural (moral). Roma (as with most other vulnerable groups) are closed in the so-called poverty circle: illiteracy - unemployment - poverty.

The process requires an increase in human resources (eg. school assistants), with capacities that should meet the real needs of the population. Inclusion in schools is as long as other aspects of inclusion. It requires huge patience, the constant presence of assistants in schools (and pre-school day care), in families, and in the social councils of local authorities, schools, and other institutions. The ideal number of pupils in one class is 5 Roma and 20 non-Roma, and ideally an assistant should not take care of more than 4 pupils.

Inclusion should be managed or made possible by the political agreement of the local political institutions, NGOs, representatives of Roma and the host community, enabled by financial support in the form of an 'inclusion office' - personnel who should take into

account the needs of all individuals - including Roma. Decisions in this social council in the local authority should be made in most cases by consensus and should involve all stakeholders. It is very important to insure that the process is running in parallel with media coverage. Every step of the process covered by the media ensures that other citizens in the community or city are sufficiently informed, thus enabling the continuation of support for the process within the local political institutions or parliament. Today's process of integration is more supporting the idea of living "alongside one another", not living "together". We want to promote not *integration* but *inclusion*.

### **How do you envisage successful work with host communities?**

Our experience tells us that this is most sensitive part of any project! After 7 years of living "alongside one another", in one of the suburbs of Subotica, in 2006 the "host" community just erupted and campaigned against their Roma neighbours due to their way of earning money, constant suspicion of stealing, "dirty" way of living etc. Unfortunately same arguments were used against Roma children in the school in this part of Subotica.

Therefore we decided to try to create a "win-win" situation, which required strong and open action. We organized an open meeting with all the revolted "host" citizens and all the Roma in question. The aim of the meeting was to start (after 7 years of being neighbours!) dialogue about all the burning problems. We listened to their joint infrastructural, sanitation and other problems. At the same time we organized with these people a social council in the local authority, and in the school where their children jointly attended the lessons. This was the first case of this kind of work in Subotica. On their initiative, and with support of our NGO, we succeeded in solving one of their biggest problems - their muddy unpaved streets.

All the citizens were involved in this action with joint work, and they jointly celebrated this special occasion in their lives. The same pattern was used when we started this inclusive approach in school.

Therefore I advise anyone leading this kind of project to tackle very seriously and in a timely manner all possible aspects and repercussions of the inclusion of Roma within the "host" community. This should take into account not only "hard" measures such as



Paving the way for future cooperation

housing, and infrastructural needs, but also the huge problems of providing social and educational services, especially to women and children. The process should be planned very carefully with the establishment of social councils in communities, schools, and local authorities. The next step is the establishment of coordination with assistants who should for several years take care of the daily needs and problems of each child in school, and also of the families.

***Do you think sufficient financial means are provided for the inclusion of Roma in Serbia?***

Despite years of work on economic inclusion, the economic part of inclusion is the weakest one. Just now we have for the first time a budget line within the Serbian budget for 2008, for the development of greenhouses for Roma living in rural areas, but it is a symbolic amount. Also we are just now starting the first serious case of resettling the slum settlements - "Gazela" - therefore we need this case to be very successful, thus providing us good arguments for the future about the integrity of Roma NGOs, healthy financial management by the coordination centre(s), and good cooperation and media coverage of this kind of project. Therefore this project should be strongly connected with the whole Roma community in Serbia, using experiences from all of Serbia.

I also see the need for the establishment of special budget lines for education, health care and economic inclusion of the Roma population in the whole of Serbia. This would for example support the development of the "recycling" industry in Serbia instead of the regional dumping facilities that provide low levels of employment.

Therefore I advocate positive discrimination for the disabled, Roma and other vulnerable groups within the labour market, but also when strategies and plans for the development of rural areas, waste management, energy sector, urban transport sector etc. are



Common Problems, Joint Solutions\*

prepared. All these strategies should strongly take in to the account positive role they can have in the sustainable inclusion and social, economic and cultural development of the Roma population.

\*The photo is taken by Mr. Stevan Nikolic during meetings of Social Council in "Zorkino Naselje" community in Subotica in spring 2006.

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**SEE NGOs exchange urban transport know-how**

On 22-23 November around 60 representatives from South East European NGOs, academics and local authorities came together for a seminar in Belgrade aimed at exchanging knowledge and experience on urban mobility issues.

The seminar, organised by CEKOR from Serbia, Eco-Sense from Macedonia, and CEE Bankwatch Network, particularly emphasised the need for low-cost measures to decrease the number of cars in cities and improve the quality of life, rather than concentrating on large new infrastructure projects.

The first day was aimed at NGO capacity building and discussions on issues ranging from leaded petrol to



NGO participants at the Belgrade urban transport seminar

bio-fuels to public-private partnerships, with presentations giving examples of efforts being made by NGOs and local authorities from around Europe to improve mobility and the quality of life in cities.

On the second day the NGO participants were joined by officials and academics from across Serbia and from Skopje and looked at what kind of cities we want

to live in and how to make policies on pedestrianisation, cycling, parking, walking and public transport which will move us towards these goals, along with a look at the city of Skopje's efforts to solve the city's notorious traffic problems.

For further information please contact Zvezdan Kalmar - [vodana \(at\) yahoo.com](mailto:vodana@yahoo.com)

## About Us

South East Europe Development Watch (SEEDW), formerly known as Stability Pact Watch, is a coalition of South East European environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) monitoring and campaigning on investments made by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and the European Union (EU). SEEDW is a project within CEE Bankwatch Network and includes For The Earth (Bulgaria); Terra Milleniul III (Romania); Eco-Sense (Macedonia); CEKOR (Serbia) and Green Action (Croatia).

Formed in September 2002, the group's focus was originally on ensuring transparency and public participation during the reconstruction process led by the Stability Pact for South East Europe. One of the Stability Pact's main tasks has been to co-ordinate reconstruction, infrastructure development and structural reforms in the region. However, due to the lack of public participation, sectoral policies and environmental legislation within SEE countries, priority has often been given to large-scale prestige infrastructure and to privatisation projects, which too often cause negative environmental and social impacts, and benefit trans-national corporations more than the local population.

The Stability Pact is to be transformed into the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) in 2008, and the main focus of development has shifted from post-war reconstruction to EU accession, but the need for scrutiny of IFI/EU investments in the SEE region is as great as ever.

SEEDW focuses on:

- monitoring and campaigning on IFI/EU-financed projects: Belgrade bypass, Cernavoda NPP, Chelopech gold mine, Zagreb municipal solid waste incinerator;
- monitoring the development of the TEN-T network to neighbouring countries and the Energy Community of SEE;
- ensuring that investments are oriented towards those with clear public and environmental benefits;
- ensuring the introduction and implementation of environmental legislation and public participation processes in SEE countries;
- and promoting sustainable energy and transport models in SEE countries.

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