



ANPED

Local Sustainability Programme

Opening the Window to Sustainability in South Eastern Europe

February 3-6, 2000
Groznjan, Croatia.

1. Introduction

The skill share was organised by ANPED (based in Amsterdam) and Green Action in Zagreb, Croatia. It brought together 27 participants from 10 countries including all the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia nations, along with Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and ANPED staff and a Board member from the Netherlands and UK. The Greek NGO who had asked to attend were unable to make it, and the ANPED Board member (Kliment Mindjov of Bulgaria) was unfortunately ill, although another member of his NGO attended.

Activities included brainstorming, discussions, finding project partners and exchanging ideas and expertise, as well as visits to two developing organic farms. The objective was to enable groups in the region to steadily improve their links with other NGOs in the region in order to make environmental actions and programmes for change more effective.

An interactive methodology was used by the workshop facilitators by having an opening and closing plenary, two round table discussions (LA21 and agriculture), skill shares and small roundtable discussions allowing discussion, direct exchange, the finding of co-operation and project partners and brainstorming on joint action plans. Presentations were short and kept to a minimum.

2. Goals

The goals of the workshop, agreed with key NGOs in advance, were:

- To strengthen and rebuild environmental action across the Balkans by establishing a regional network which enables the exchange of information, contacts and publications.
- To enable environmental groups to play the fullest possible part in facilitating cross-border co-operation on new and existing projects.
- To enable groups in the region to steadily improve their links with other NGOs and agencies across Europe.
- To increase regional sustainable development and help develop civil society in the region
- To help break down any divisions and hostility that may have arisen between NGOs as a result of the conflicts in the region.

The wars during the last nine years have damaged both NGOs and the environment. In order to make environmental action plans more effective and to strengthen civil society NGOs need to work together by exchanging information, transferring expertise and executing joint projects. This event seeks to help that happen more.

3. Activity Report - Day 1

3.1 Introduction

Sabine van Grafhorst welcomed the participants and described the participatory nature of the workshop. Its objective is to start a regional network and to find out in which fields and in which sense there is a need for further co-operation.

Chris Church talks about the advantages of being part of a network and specifically the advantages of being in a network for this region. Some of the advantages are:

- It is easier to build contacts with other NGOs;
- It can connect NGOs to relevant projects like the European Cities and Towns Campaign and RERP;
- NGOs can work together for their shared interests;
- Expertise and ideas (and problems) can be shared;
- It can help NGOs get Involved in processes such as Environment for Europe and the CSD.

How can we make networking more useful and what kind of networking do we want to do?

To find an answer to these questions the group split up in two, to discuss the ideas on the hand of the two issues most identified by the participants: the Local Agenda 21 planning model and sustainable agriculture and rural development.

3.2 Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

Ranko Tadic from the group Agrimediteraneo and 'EkoLiburnia' facilitated the discussion.

Two main problems for sustainable agriculture in South Eastern Europe are the lack of decisions for not going any lower on the prices and the high costs for the farmers to get their products standardised. A network might help to get closer to a solution to these problems as it can disseminate information on actions and programmes and can link people who are

interested in the same project . A network can also help identify and highlight the problems that farmers in SEE are having with the costs of certification and marketing.

Another identified obstacle to achieve sustainable rural development are the lack of money for small projects to put ideas into action.

A further advantage of such a network would be that the work which needs to be done can be distributed between the different members of the network. One group which is specialised in education can take care of training and other groups can take care of research and development, in order to make sure that all the work that needs to be done, gets done and not duplicated. Another advantage is that through the network you can meet people who are interested in the same subject and you can go for a joint project with a joint funding proposal.

3.3 Local Agenda 21 and local Sustainability

Chris Church facilitated this discussion group. Two main problems for Local Agenda 21-related activity in the region were identified:

- In many cases local government is weak and not keen or able to build working relations with local NGOs and community groups
- Most NGOs are still focussed on short term projects and finding solutions to immediate problems.

Many of these local projects are certainly good work, and fit into the broader goal of 'local sustainability'. The development of this work was also discussed on the next day (see 4.2.2 below). There is a need to build better links between NGOs and local authorities: this is a European-wide issues, with specific concerns for the CEE and especially in the FYR. Good practice (e.g. Maribor et al in Slovenia, and some work in Romania) was noted. The upcoming ANPED manual on local sustainability will highlight this, and ANPED hopes to have a specific skill-share on this in the autumn.

A strategy is needed to get to long term solutions. A network could be useful for this. It can provide NGOs with successful stories, links in to other networks (e.g. European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign). Country-level networks of sustainable cities and towns could be a good starting point.

3.4 Priorities for a network

In the plenary discussion that followed there was unanimous support for a SEE network (it was also agreed that it should use this phrase and focus on this area). Many possible areas of work were discussed. The priority work areas for such a network were then developed with the participants (and put in order of importance):

1. Support and advice on fundraising. New ways to develop proposals could be taught.
2. The exchange of information, transferring the expertise and experiences of projects.
3. Finding partners for joint projects.
4. A network provides an important mechanism for education and awareness raising in the SEE countries.
5. It can provide an opportunity to develop and execute specific Balkan projects.
6. It deepens and enriches the experience and knowledge about the situation in the countries
7. The secretariat of the network can co-ordinate the compilation of best practices of projects in South Eastern Europe. This way, potential funders can see that it is worthwhile to put money in this region.

4. Activity report - Day 2

4.1 The proposed Regional Environmental Reconstruction Program in the framework of the Stability Pact

Svjetlana Cupret-Obradovic from the Regional Environment Centre in Zagreb talked about the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Program for South Eastern Europe in the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. Senior government officials from Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia and FYR Macedonia agreed to co-operate in a reconstruction programme for the environment of South Eastern Europe.

There will be a meeting for SEE government officials and ministers of the environment in Skopje on March 15 and 16 to agree on the endorsement of priorities and which of the activities and projects will be the focus. The REC is making sure that there will be an NGO input and Svjetlana asked the participants to apply to attend this meeting and the REC would provide funding. Four NGOs who attended the workshop got invited by the REC to participate (Green Action from Croatia, Ecologist Movement of Macedonia, TER from Romania and Borrowed Nature from Bulgaria). The final agreements of this meeting will be put in a document and presented at the Regional Financial Conference in Brussels on March 29.

4.2 Developing ideas

The group identified issues which were considered urgent for the region and split up into smaller groups to discuss what the problems were around these issues and what kind of actions could be undertaken to reduce/solve the problem.

4.2.1 One of the sub groups discussed **urban sustainability**.

The problems mentioned by the participants were in the field of public administration (no heating oil in Serbia, transport, public health, deterioration of historical monuments and public participation) and in the field of air pollution (bad public transport system and the environmental impact of climate change).

A subject specific network could help with capacity building, to enable NGOs to work more effectively with planners, civic authorities and others. The group came up with the idea to start a Summer school for NGOs: a first outline of this is attached.

4.2.2 A second group looked at **awareness raising and education**.

The reason that this is such an important issue is that the public knows that there are environmental problems but does not know what they can do about it. Education can show people that there are alternatives to the products they use or the life styles they have which are less damaging to the environment. How can we reach the public? The key points that emerged from the discussions included:

- Work on local issues because local people know about local problems: one role for NGOs is to be aware how such local issues relate to global problems, but not to highlight this all the time.
- One way to improve our access to the public is to find artists and professional communicators (as the group in Slovenia has done) to find innovations to spread ideas and solutions for environmental problems caused by individuals.

- Every campaign should always be aware that its' activities always have an impact on the public to some extent: wherever possible this should be recognised, and planned so as to ensure that positive messages are received.
- There are many innovative ways to get to the public already in use (e.g. Bulgaria work on ozone): we should learn from each others' good practice, and perhaps develop joint initiatives.
- It is important to keep in the back of your mind that every campaign always should establish indicators to measure success.
- There been a noted increase in activity by NGOs in South-East Europe, and especially in the former Yugoslavia over the last five years, and much of that activity has also improved in quality and effectiveness. The improvement in the Yugoslavia region is of course due in large part to the ending of conflict in many parts, but even in conflict regions there are still effective NGOs seeking to protect the environment and develop civil society.
- Yet there is little recognition for such work, and as a result of this the good work that is done is often not passed on to other NGOs who could learn from it. It was therefore suggested that ANPED should do more to promote NGO action. It was agreed that we should do more to promote the good work that is being done. With that end in mind ANPED should therefore seek to produce a short guide to effective practice: this could include perhaps 20 examples, alongside a short guide showing why they are good practice, what principles of good practice we might apply, and how this links in to public awareness and participation.

4.2.3 A third group followed up the discussions from the day before on **Agriculture**

It was agreed that a joint project should be developed. Some ideas for joint action were agreed:

- Internet discussion group
- Comparative pilot studies regarding organic agriculture. (As organic agriculture might be a solution to have access to the EU markets)
- Training for organic farming

It was acknowledged that this also links to concerns about unsustainable agriculture issues, such as GE foods, on which work is being done in Croatia.

A more detailed project proposal needs to be developed to link Sustainable Agriculture, Rural Development and Eco-Tourism. ANPED committed to supporting this; plans had already been discussed for a Europe-wide skill-share on NGOs and sustainable agriculture.

5. Follow-up

ANPED will have its Annual General Meeting in Bratislava from March 24 - 26. This will include a follow-up discussion on the draft report from the Groznjan workshop and to discuss the outcome of the RERP meeting in Skopje on March 15 and 16. Thanks to the funders for this workshop, ANPED could ensure that at least one representative from each of the FYR countries will be fully funded for the Bratislava meeting.

A final report will be produced after that. Development work will be meanwhile started to look at the feasibility of the projects discussed at Groznjan.

Appendix 1. A 'summer school' on urban sustainability.

(Suggested primarily by the EcoUrban workshop, Belgrade)

The goal of this project is to strengthen and reconstruct the regional co operation in view of the common issues of regional and European integration by having lectures on various subjects. The course should be open to and useful for NGOs, academics and sustainability professionals. One of the outcomes could be common syllabus for university courses in contemporary scientific and social trends and adapted to regional needs. The following subjects:

1 Multicultural tradition of Balkan civilization,

- urban-rural (dis)continuity and community's identity
- from seminomadic tribalism to global cosmopolitanism
- lessons from history
- political history of nation state formation
- urban history and community's identity
- social history and anthropological background
- geography of communication routes
- environmental (natural) context

2. Prospects for sustainable development of built environment

- Vernacular architecture and traditional knowledge

- Cultural; codes of use of space
- Solution types
- Building techniques
- Housing development with reference to self-help patterns
- Legal political framework
- Location and employment
- Land ownership
- Financial arrangements
- Energy saving and alternative sources

Appendix 2. Upcoming events

- The RERP meeting in Skopje on March 15 and 16. NGOs participating in the workshop were invited to give their comments and thoughts for environmental reconstruction.
- ANPED's Annual General Meeting in Bratislava on March 24-26. At this meeting NGOs participating at the Groznjan workshop will be invited, representing each one of the SEE countries.

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