

## Capacity Building to Put the Aarhus Convention into Action and to Support the Development of PRTR Systems in SEE Countries



Beautiful Balkan (Photo: Kaidi Tingas)

### Background

The Aarhus Convention (AC) adopted in 1998 in Aarhus, Denmark, is ratified by 45 countries and the European Community, including the five project countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). Interest has also been shown by Kosovo (as defined by UNSCR 1244) to implement the AC. Despite of progress, there are numerous gaps in transposing AC requirements in these countries, e.g. the less developed public participation at permitting processes, the difficult access to justice in environmental matters and the absence of systems for access to environmental information (PRTR).

### Project

By the project progress has been made in following areas:

- Officials, responsible for public participation in environmental decision-making were strengthened,
- NGOs were strengthened to use participatory skills influencing decision-making processes

and improving the quality of environmental decisions,

- judiciary, authorities and NGOs were strengthened regarding access to justice in environmental matters and removing barriers to access to justice,
- operators and NGOs were strengthened to understand their role and responsibilities in developing and operating functioning PRTRs.

The progress has been realized by initiating model participation processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia. On planned industrial installations and on modifications in existing industrial installations the target groups were trained. Toolkits, focusing on public participation requirements and offering practical advices and experiences to decision-makers were published (in 4 national languages). To promote access to justice roundtable dialogues and trainings were performed. For PRTR local language guidance materials for operators, authorities and other stakeholders were prepared, web portals for better public access to PRTR data were developed and the free German PRTR reporting software was installed and adapted in Macedonia, as well user manuals for authorities and operators assisting to use of this software were prepared.

- Target country/region: Western Balkan region: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo
- Duration: 04/2011 – 10/2013
- Beneficiary: Ministries and agencies responsible for the implementation of the Aarhus Convention, NGOs, the judiciary, legal professionals institutions/persons responsible for developing and operating PRTR systems
- Implementing organisation: The Regional Environmental Center (REC), Hungary
- Project number: 23 155