

Public Participation in REC Partner Countries

Zsolt Bauer

Head of Communication and PR



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

The fall of Berlin Wall...

- Transition ...
TRANSFORMATION

- System
- Society
- Economy (markets, households, companies)
- Governance – political, governmental



The “Environment for Europe” process

- its first meeting in Dobruška (Czechoslovakia) in 1991, with the objective to agree on ways to improve the environment at a **pan-European level**
- ...The third Ministerial Conference, held in Sofia (Bulgaria) in 1995 took a step further, by endorsing the Guidelines on **Public Participation**
 - The “Environment for Europe” process is a unique partnership of member States within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region, organizations of the United Nations system represented in the region, other intergovernmental organizations, regional environmental centres, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other major groups. The “Environment for Europe” process and its Ministerial Conferences provide a high-level platform for stakeholders to discuss, decide and join efforts in addressing environmental priorities across the 56 countries of the UNECE region, and is a regional pillar of sustainable development.



The Aarhus Convention

- The Aarhus Convention as a unique international legal instrument has been increasing transparency and environmental democracy in Europe and beyond and significantly has contributed to sustainable development and improvement of governance.
 - Convention was signed on June 25, 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus during the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (UNECE EfE).
 - It entered into force on 30 October 2001.



Parties and Signatories of the Aarhus Convention

(As of 26 September 2012, UNECE)



The Convention

- Providing rights
 - for public access to environmental **information**
 - to participate and influence **decision-making** from the early stage
 - It provides a framework for **short, medium and long-term** decision-making (project level, policies, programs, plans, legislation) in environmental matters.
 - for the public to **access to justice** in environmental matters



Limiting Factors

- includes problems of practical implementation of public participation and access to justice pillars.
 - The pressure by **short term political and economic interests** to leave out public participation and reduce transparency is still present.
 - Public participation is often perceived more just as an additional procedure and not as an opportunity.
 - Sometimes **the complexity of the administrative procedure** is an obstacle for an active public participation



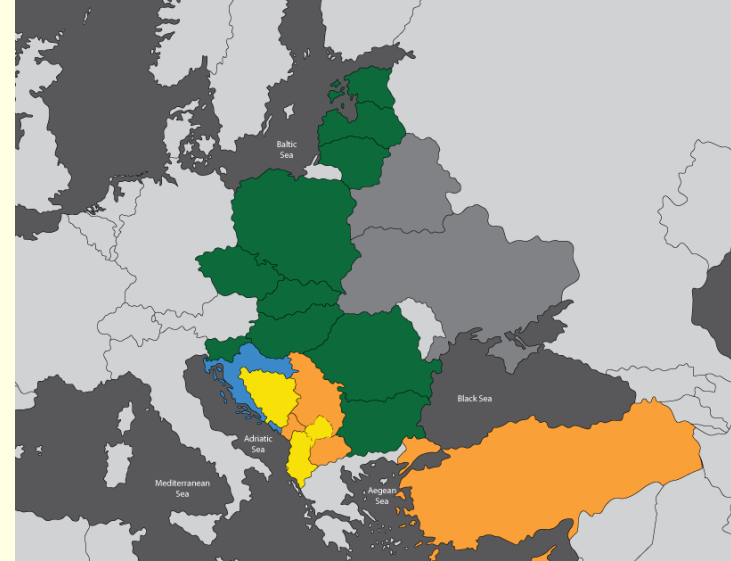
Lessons Learned

- **Strategic approach is needed** to support practical implementation to achieve efficient results on a long term basis
- **Systematic and complex support should be** offered to authorities, civil society and other actors and a combination of technical assistance and different capacity building methods, pilot projects could be used
- **Dialogue should be continuously promoted** among the key actors with the involvement of the civil society in the Aarhus Convention implementation



Regional Environmental Center (REC)

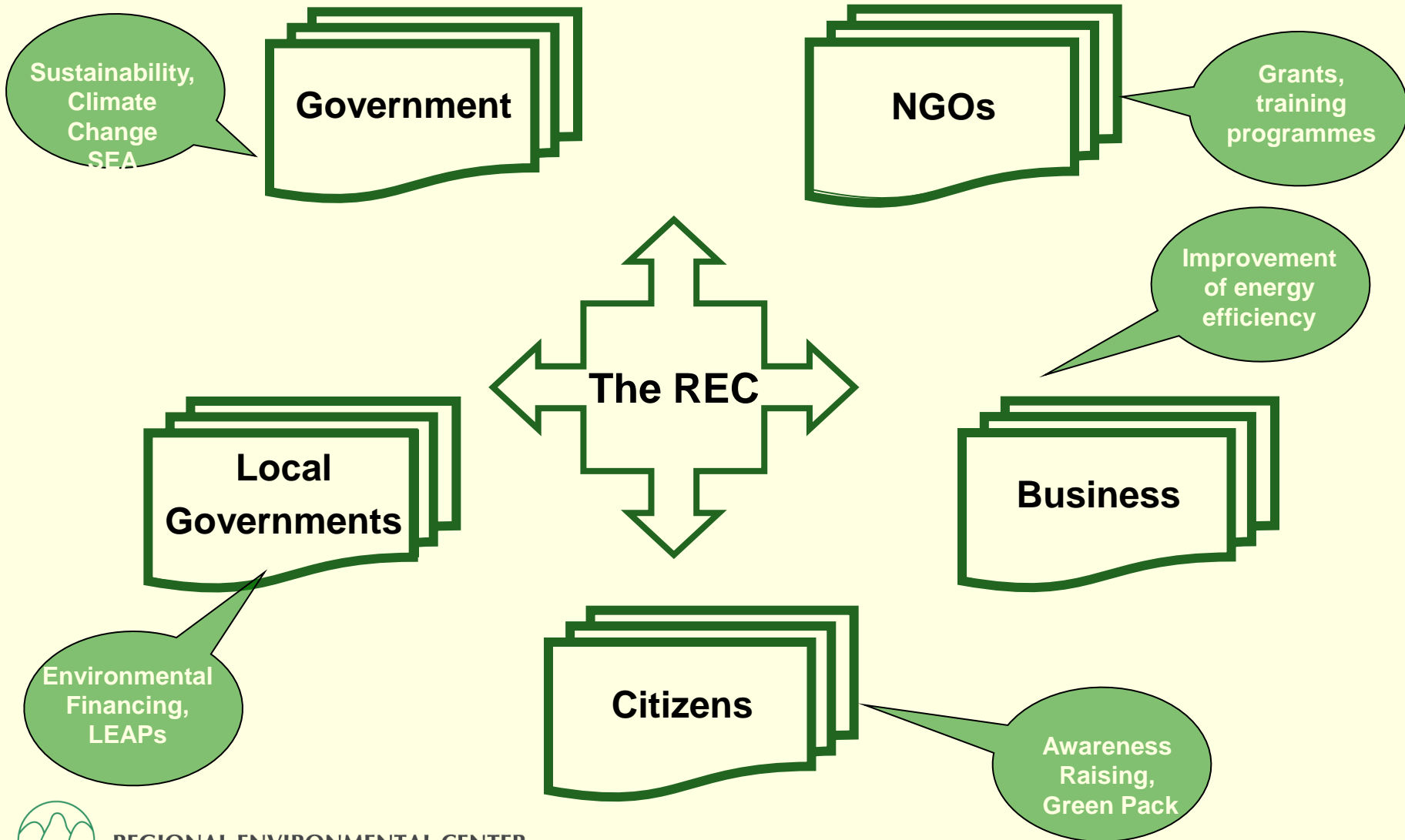
- “... is an international organisation with a mission to assist in solving environmental problems (...)”
 - Established by the **US, EC and Hungary**
 - The **REC** is legally based on a **charter signed by 31 countries** and the EC
 - Multi-stakeholder international Board
 - **190 staff** (some 30 nationalities)
 - **Offices in 17+ countries**
 - 100% project based organization
 - over **200 running projects**
 - 10 – 12 million € annual turnover
 - Operates in various regions:
 - EU Members of Central and Eastern Europe
 - EU Enlargement countries, candidates and potential candidates
 - Eastern Partnership Countries
 - EU27
 - Operation beyond the REC Country Office Network



A Salute to President George Bush:
A REC founding father



Bridging – across borders



Topic areas of the REC

• “Governance for sustainability”
main direction of work

- Educational Tools
- Health and Environment
- Law Development, Enforcement and Compliance
- Local Governance
- **Participatory Governance**
- Sustainable Development Academy

• “Green economy” main direction
of work

- Biodiversity
- Climate Change and Clean Energy
- Environmental Financing
- Environmental Management
- Green Transport
- Water Management



Key REC Publications

- Aarhus Meets Kyoto (Print, 2003)
- Advising Citizens (Print, 1996)
- Beyond Boundaries: The International Dimensions of Public Participation for the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Print, 1996)
- Environmental Democracy (Print, 2004)
- Environmental Democracy in Practice (Print, 2002)
- Flowing Freely (Print, 2007)
- Proceedings of the International Workshop on Public Participation and Health Aspects in Strategic Environmental Assessment (Print, 2001)
- Promoting Environmental Mediation as a Tool for Public Participation and Conflict Resolution (Print, 2007)



Key Example: Improving the Practices of Public Participation

Next Steps in Implementing the Aarhus Convention (2004-2006)

- Enhancing the implementation and awareness of the Aarhus Convention in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo (in transition) and the Republic of Moldova (administration)

- focuses on activities such as providing technical assistance, sharing experience and ensuring the quality of environmental decision-making
- Activities are set to start in 2004 through three regional capacity-building workshops



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

| STREAM — Strengthening Local Environmental Planning and Civil Society (Belarus/Moldova) | LEAPSK — Local Environmental Action Planning for Sustainability in Kosovo* |
|---|---|
| | |
| <p>STREAM is a framework programme designed to help local communities enhance their capacities to develop, implement and finance environmental projects.</p> <p>Duration: 2002-2013 Phase: Strategy NEA Budget: EUR 2,200,000</p> <p>IN-ACTIBUS: • 14 local communities • 14 pilot projects • 11,877 citizens/NGOs involved • 200 projects started</p> | <p>Local environmental action plans (LEAPs) are strategic documents that bring together community interests, local environmental planning, and national environmental management practices at national level and fostering local environmental planning capacity.</p> |
| <p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing mechanisms and tools for the sustainable use of natural resources and promoting the integration of nature conservation into local development plans Providing for pilot projects a strategic investment Building local self-environment projects <p>Impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable tourism and development processes within pilot local communities Local environmental management Small green local environmental projects Contribute to reduce | <p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving environmental management practices at national level and fostering local environmental planning capacity |

www.envsec.org

Focus Area

Information on Environment and Security and Participation in Risk Management

Increased awareness and participation of civil society in environmental and security decision making at local level

- 38 Aarhus Centres in 11 countries in 4 regions (EECCA)
- ENVSEC outreach facility
- Example of sustainability through state and local government budget contributions

Increased government-civil society cooperation for effective environmental governance

- 35 NGO projects supports in Armenia and Azerbaijan (17 and 18)
- Parallel funding from donors: Austria, Norway, Luxembourg, USA, Statoil

OSCE



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

Smart Tool – Green Pack

- 2001 with the support of Toyota Motor Corporation, the REC developed a comprehensive environmental education programme in Central and Eastern Europe (Green Pack)
- A multi-media environmental education curriculum kit
 - Primarily intended for school teachers and their students (11-15)
 - Focus on particular aspects of environmental protection and sustainable development
- **~ 40.000 teachers**
- **~ 4.500.000 students**
- **18 countries....**



Smart Tool – Sustainable Development Academy

- Courses for Sustainable Development
 - an educational programme for key government officials responsible for the “three pillars” of sustainable development
 - In several regions:
 - Central and Eastern Europe
 - South Eastern Europe
 - Visegrad countries
 - Central Asia
 - The Black Sea region – Turkey
 - Russian Federation
- Courses of Sustainable Development Academy is designed to give members of various ministries, agencies and the business — not only environmental — a chance to examine the major approaches to sustainable development
- Alumni members formulate a living and vital network across borders and regions



Thank you for your attention!



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

www.rec.org