

AARHUS CENTRES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



Photo by: Dino Kasalo



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THE AARHUS CONVENTION

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, also known as the Aarhus Convention, is a unique legal tool that links the environment and human rights. Adopted in the Danish city of Aarhus in June 1998, its main objective is to contribute “to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in an environment that is adequate to his or her health and well-being.”

Through its three pillars, the Aarhus Convention enshrines the following public rights:

1. the right to information about the environment;
2. the right to actively participate in decision-making processes that will likely have an impact on the environment; and
3. the right to pursue legal remedies in case the first two rights are violated.



The Convention also prescribes that persons seeking to exercise their rights under its three pillars should do so without being subject to penalization, prosecution or harassment or discrimination based on nationality, citizenship or place of residence.

The Convention's Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR), adopted in 2003, aims to improve public access to information through the establishment of harmonized emission and transfer pollutant registers. Its GMO Amendment obliges the Parties to ensure that public opinion is sought before approving open field trials or placing GMOs on the market.

AARHUS CONVENTION



Adopted in Aarhus, Denmark, on 25 June 1998, the Convention is the first legally binding instrument granting citizens the right of access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters at the local, national and trans-boundary levels.

The Convention:

Links environmental rights with human rights
Provides governments with standards of transparency, participation and accountability in environmental affairs
Promotes greater openness in international environmental decision-making processes

THE THREE PILLARS OF THE AARHUS CONVENTION

Access to environmental information:

The right of the citizens to receive environmental information that is held by public authorities

Public participation in environmental decision making:

The right of the citizens to participate in the preparation of plans, programmes, policies and legislation relating to the environment.

Access to justice:

The right of the citizens to challenge public decisions that have been made without respecting the two aforementioned rights or environmental law in general



The Conventions Protocol is the first legally binding international instrument on pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs). A PRTR is a publicly accessible inventory containing information on emissions from facilities to the environment.



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AARHUS CONVENTION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) became a signatory to the Aarhus Convention on 15 September 2008, marking an important step forward for environmental governance in the country. Monitoring and promoting the implementation of the Convention falls under the competence of the Department of Environmental Protection of the BiH Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations. National Implementation Reports for BiH for the years 2011, 2014 and 2017 are available at www.unece.org.

The OSCE-supported BiH Network of Aarhus Centres has observed numerous weaknesses in the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in BiH, including limited awareness amongst citizens on their rights deriving from the Convention, a lack of capacity or general unwillingness of public authorities to fully implement the provisions of the Convention as well as numerous obstacles to accessing justice in environmental matters. These shortcomings allow environmental degradation to go unchecked, putting the quality of life, health, and security of the people of BiH at risk. As a vital source of independence and expertise on the environment, the BiH Aarhus Centres work tirelessly to support collective responses to these issues.

NETWORK OF AARHUS CENTRES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



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In order to support the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in BiH, a national Network of Aarhus Centres was formed in 2013 under the auspices of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Network represents a platform for exchanging information between competent authorities on the one hand and the public on the other. It encourages transparency within the work of public bodies and enables citizens to voice their views and concerns on decisions that may have an impact on the environment.

The BiH Network of Aarhus Centres comprises four Aarhus Centres based in Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Tuzla and Zenica. The Aarhus Centres are part of a broader OSCE-wide network which covers 15 countries in South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the South Caucasus. They work to:

- facilitate citizen access to information;
- support citizen involvement in decision-making on environment issues;
- provide support to the legal protection of human rights in the area of the environment.

As well as:

- promote democratic values and procedures in environmental protection;
- promote transparency and accountability at all levels of decision-making;
- actively contribute to the improvement of the environment and the protection of the rights of citizens and future generations to live in an environment that does not endanger their health and well-being.

THE OFFICES OF THE AARHUS CENTRES ARE PLACES WHERE CITIZENS CAN RECEIVE EXPERT ADVICE, OBTAIN QUALITY AND TIMELY INFORMATION AND BECOME INCLUDED IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.



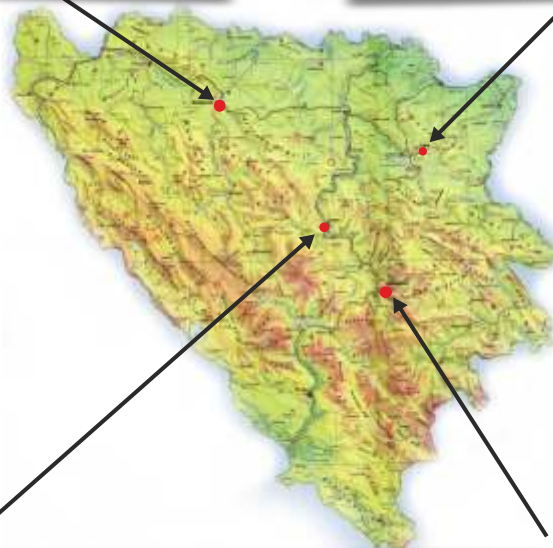
Center for
Environment

In June 2013, **Center for Environment** established **Aarhus Centre Banja Luka** with support from the EU and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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centar za ekologiju i energiju

In June 2013, **Center for Ecology and Energy** launched the work of **Aarhus Centre Tuzla** with support from the EU and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.



In September 2019, **Eko Forum** established **Aarhus Centre Zenica** with support from the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the City of Zenica.

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The Association "Resource Aarhus Center in B&H" (**Aarhus Centre Sarajevo**) was established in May 2012 with the support of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the City of Sarajevo.



ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

Overview

The collection and dissemination of environmental information to the public is one of the key roles of the Aarhus Centres. This includes submitting information requests to public authorities, as well as making information available to the public through the media and Internet. The Aarhus Centres also house libraries containing a wide array of resources on the environment and continuously publish brochures, newsletters and other materials on important environmental topics. Their websites list contacts for relevant public institutions and NGOs as well as environmental legislation and strategic documents from all levels of authority.

Aarhus Centers provide:

- ✓ free-of-charge, user friendly information;
- ✓ access to information they have;
- ✓ access to information held by the authorities obtained through information requests;
- ✓ pro bono (free of charge) legal services and legal advice on environmental matters;
- ✓ education to the public on environmental issues.

Aarhus Centers are:

- ✓ strengthening public participation;
- ✓ bridges to direct involvement in decision-making;
- ✓ initiators and watchdogs of environmental law and policy;
- ✓ raising environmental protection standards;
- ✓ promoting the harmonization of domestic laws with international standards.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- ✓ get actively involved as a volunteer;
- ✓ stay informed about environmental issues in BiH;
- ✓ inform others about the activities of the Aarhus Centres via social media;
- ✓ Make a donation to the Aarhus Centres

Success stories

AARHUS CENTRES REDUCE DISASTER RISKS THROUGH PROVISION OF INFORMATION

Following the devastating floods in 2014, Aarhus Centres Banja Luka and Sarajevo assisted the City of Banja Luka and the municipalities of Goražde and Vogošća in revising their protection and rescue plans, organized educational workshops and developed and printed information packages with emergency telephone numbers and instructions.

ZNACI ZA UZBUNJIVANJE

POSTUPCI GRADANA

»OPĆA OPASNOST«

Emittira se završavajući tonom u trajanju od 100 sekundi, a tim da se u toku prva četiri sata, emiti opće opasnosti ponovno više puta.

Signal općeg opasnosti emituje se u trenutku kada građanima i materijalnim dobrima prijjeti opasnost od:

- 1) Pojava plavnog vala koji nastaje od rušenja ili prelijevanja brana na hidroakumulacijama
- 2) Velikog požara
- 3) Kretanja radioaktivnog oblaka ili pojave većih količina otrovnih materija u vidu oblaka iz hemijskih postrojenja
- 4) U ratu kada prijeti opasnost od artiljerijskih ili drugih dejstava ili napada iz vazduha na određenom području
- 5) Druge vrste opasnosti, koje mogu ugroziti živote i zdravlje većeg broja ljudi na određenom području.

Uključite radio ili tv prijemnik. Poslušajte saopštenje o vrsti nadolazeće opasnosti i mjerama koje je neophodno poduzeti.

1) **AKO SE RADI O POJAVI PLAVNOG VALA**, građani su dužni, ako imaju vremena, producati sigurne postupke:
 (1) u slučaju kiči uključiti električne i druge instalacije i završiti vodot.
 (2) napustiti priču vodu i životne namirnice sklone na više etažne kuće ili stana.
 (3) uzeti neophodne lične stvari (dobre dokumente, novac, bankovne čekove i dr.) i sakriti se na sigurno mjesto, odmah napustiti mjesto koje ne može biti sigurno bez dodatne zaštite i na tom mjestu sačekati artiljerijske signale za opasnost opasnosti, a nakon tog signala poduzeti po nadležnima i nadležnima uputstava izabrane zaštite ili povremeno civilne zaštite.
OPASNO JE RADI O POJAVI VELIKOG POŽARA, građani moraju, ako imaju vremena, producati sigurne postupke:
 (1) u slučaju kiči uključiti sve električne aparate i završiti dovod gasa.
 (2) završiti vata i procese da li se sprječilo stvaranje vladuha i razbuktavanje požara.
 (3) uzeti neophodne stvari (dokumente, otušu, hranu, lična dokumenta, novac i druge vrijednosti), a zatim napustiti zgradu i sakriti se na sigurno mjesto.
 (4) uključiti se u akciju kaskazivanja i gašenja požara, prema naredbama odgovornih lica civilne zaštite ili povremeno civilne zaštite.
 3) **AKO SE RADI O POJAVI RADIOAKTIVNOG OBLAKA ILI POJAVI VEĆIH KOLIČINA OTROVNIH MATERIJALA U VIDU OBLAKA IZ HEMIJSKIH POSTROJENJA ILI SKLADIŠTA**, građani trebaju poduzeti sigurne postupke:
 (1) uključiti se među na ulici, na namirn mjestu, u stanu ili drugom mjestu na otvorenom i bez panike oti u najbliže sklonište ili drugo mjesto pogodno za sklonjenje, ako takvo mjesto postoji.
 (2) uključiti se u mogućnosti, izdatu porucni sredstva za ličnu zaštitu ili primarna sredstva od kojih se mogu napraviti određena zaštitna sredstva i te sredstva koristiti da se izbjegne opasnost od radioaktivnog oblaka, otrovnih otrovnih materija.
 (3) prilikom sredstva za pružanje prve medicinske pomoći, dekontaminaciju sredstva i primarna sredstva za dekontaminaciju, ako takavi sredstva postoje.
 (4) nakon izdatog sklonjenja dalje treba postupiti prema uputstvima odgovornih lica civilne zaštite ili odgovornog lica civilne zaštite.

»PRESTANAK OPASNOSTI«

Emittira se jednoličnim tonom u trajanju od 60 sekundi.

Morate prestati provoditi mjere zaštite iz saopštenja. U slučaju potrebe pomozite i službena zaštite i spašavanja, koje provode jedinice i službe civilne zaštite i druge mjere zaštite i spašavanja.

Kada se emituje signal za **PRESTANAK OPASNOSTI**, građani su dužni da se uključe u akciju zaštite i spašavanja koju provode jedinice i povremeno civilne zaštite i službe zaštite i spašavanja, kao što je uobičajeno na pružanju prve pomoći, nabavljanju terena, dekontaminaciji i ostalim zadacima koje građani mogu da vrše, odmah napustiti da napuste sklonište i druga zaštitna objekta u kojima su se nalazili i vratiti se u svoje kuće ili stanove ili na svoja radna mjesta.

SVE POJAVE I OPASNOSTI KOJE MOGU UGROZITI LJUDE I MATERIJALNA DOBRA, GRADANI MOGU PRILJAVITI NA SLJEDEĆE BROJEVE:

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Izvod iz Pravilnika o organiziranju i funkcioniranju operativnih centara civilne zaštite ("Službene novine Federacije BiH", broj 8/07)

Materijal napravljen u okviru projekta "Jačanje kapaciteta Aarhus centara o smanjenju rizika od katastrofa u okviru jačanja saradnje u zaštiti zajedničarima."

AARHUS CENTRES HELP TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ON PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS (POPS)

Aarhus Centre Sarajevo successfully assisted the drafting of the National Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Convention in BiH by obtaining information from various institutions and gathering data on POPs in the country.

AARHUS CENTRES PUBLISH SHADOW REPORTS

Due to delays in issuing official reports on Aarhus Convention implementation in BiH, the Aarhus Convention, with the support of Czech environmental NGO Arnika, published "shadow" implementation reports in 2015 and 2017. The reports detail the various obstacles members of the public face in accessing information, participating in environmental decision-making and accessing justice.

AARHUS CENTRES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

10



Environmental democracy: progress unreported

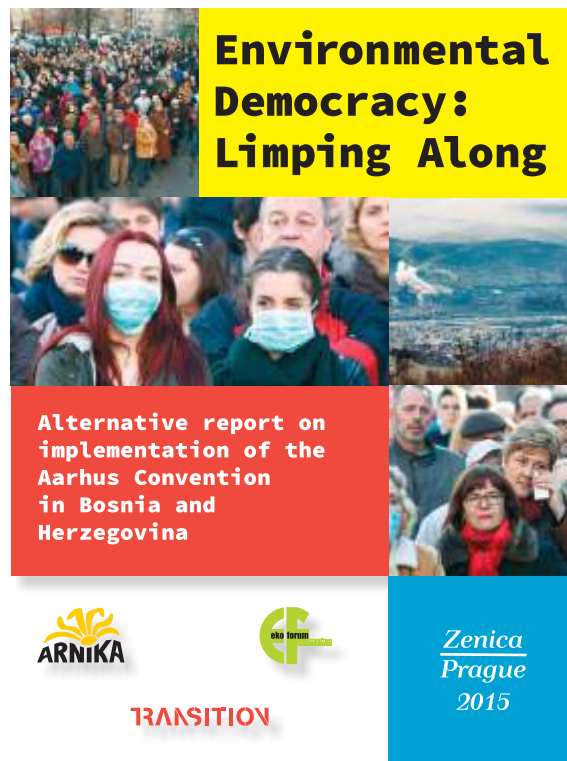
Aarhus Convention shadow implementation report
Bosnia and Herzegovina
2017



Aarhus
Centre
Sarajevo



TRANSITION



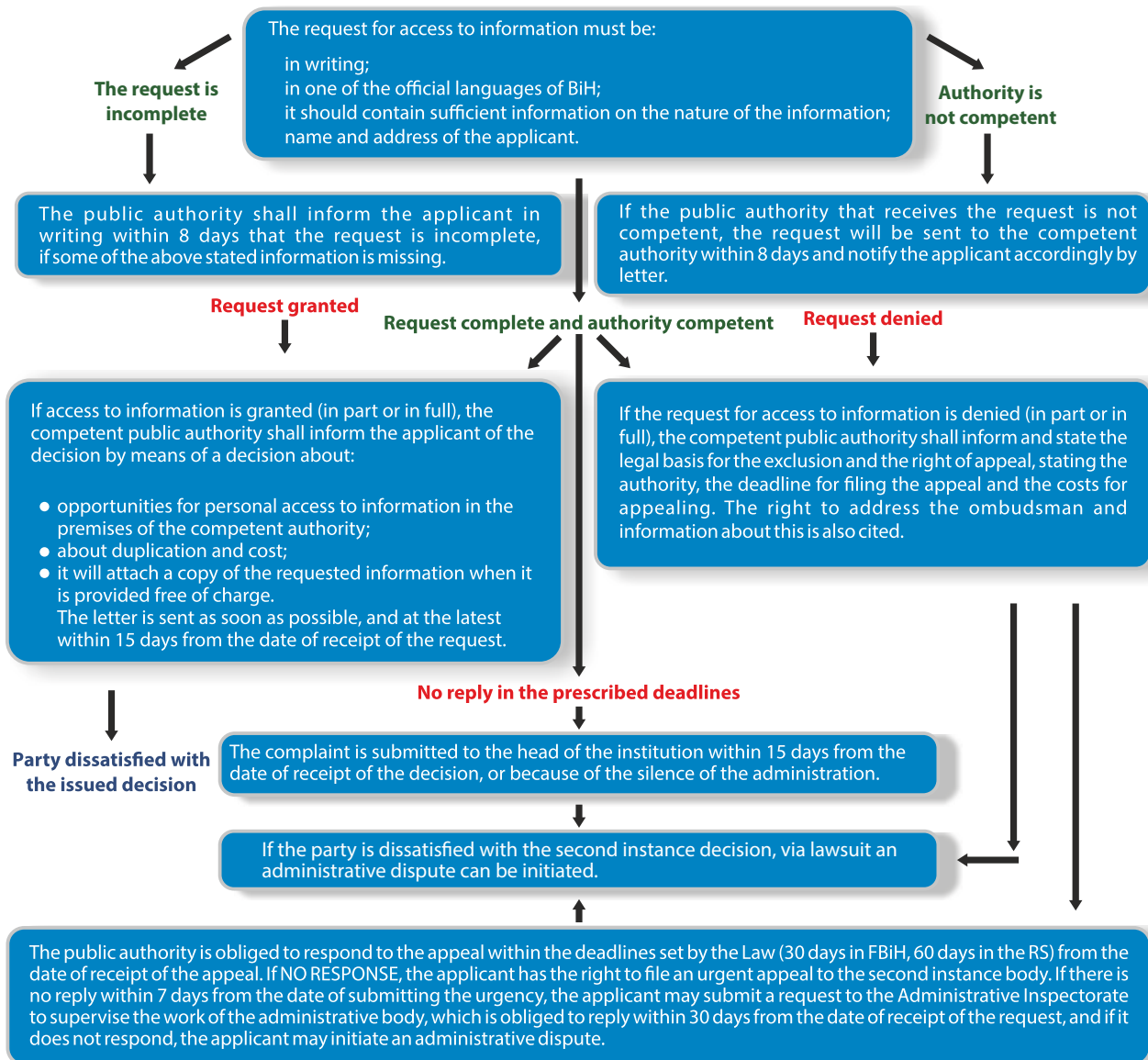
TRANSITION

*Zenica
Prague
2015*

“The polluter pays” study

In 2019, Aarhus Centre Zenica, with the support of the EU, conducted an analysis on the collection and distribution of funds earmarked for environmental protection in the Federation of BiH. The study aims to enhance citizens' confidence in government, prevent abuses and create the conditions necessary to improve the quality of life of those most exposed to pollution. Its findings have been the subject of much discussion within and outside of government and will be used by parliamentarians when debating the new Law on Environmental Fund of FBiH.

PROCEDURE FOR ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Overview

The Aarhus Centres help to ensure that citizen voices are heard and taken into account in decision-making processes relating to:

- specific activities that can potentially significantly (negatively) affect the environment;
- plans, programs and policies relating to the environment; and
- preparation of executive regulations and/or generally applicable legally binding normative instruments relating to the environment.

In this regard, the Aarhus Centres have helped draft manuals for public authorities on properly involving the public in decision-making processes, prepared instructions for citizens on analysing and commenting on environmental impact assessments and delivered trainings aimed at developing the skills of citizens and public authorities when participating in environmental decision-making processes.



Through the websites of the Aarhus Centres, the public is regularly informed about planned public consultations and debates throughout the country. Also, Aarhus Centres provide free advice on how citizens can be best involved in the consultation process, through social media, e-mail and over the phone.

SUCCESS STORIES

Aarhus Centres support public involvement in drafting and adoption of new FBiH Law on Environmental Protection

In 2014, the Aarhus Centres supported the FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism in organizing public hearings on the proposed changes to the FBiH Law on Environmental Protection in Sarajevo, Mostar, Tuzla and Bihać. A total of 212 participants comprising representatives of Federal, cantonal and municipal ministries and institutions, NGOs, international organizations, academia, private companies, media, and citizens took part in the four public debates, generating around 400 comments. Aarhus Centre Sarajevo supervised the working group that discussed the public's comments, increasing the transparency of the entire process.

However, five years later, the proposed new law is still awaiting adoption. Finding such a delay to be unacceptable, the Aarhus Centres collected the signatures of over 1000 citizens in Kakanj, Jablanica, Mostar, Sarajevo, Tuzla and Zenica who agreed that better environmental protection was urgently needed. The significant contribution of the Aarhus Centres was also evident in their preparation and proposal of eleven additional amendments to the Law, of which five were adopted by the FBiH Government in July 2019. The Law, which passed the FBiH House of Representatives in September 2019, is now awaiting adoption by the FBiH House of Peoples.



AARHUS CENTRES ENSURE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN AARHUS CONVENTION NIRs

Together with the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Aarhus Centres helped organize and mediate public consultations during the preparation of the country's Second and Third Aarhus Convention National Implementation Reports (NIRs). With the help of the Aarhus Centres and through their strong co-operation with the FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism, it was possible to collect a large number of comments from public institutions, the academic community, and the non-governmental sector.



AARHUS CENTRE SARAJEVO ENSURES CITIZENS HAVE A SAY ON CHANGES TO THE LAW ON PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF ANIMALS OF BIH

The draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Protection and Welfare of Animals of BiH was issued on February 24, 2016, requesting amendments to the provisions relating to the breeding of animals for fur. The draft was submitted to the BiH Parliamentary Assembly (PA) via an urgent procedure, thereby bypassing the public consultation stage. Since the breeding of animals for fur has a significant environmental impact, this amounted to a violation of the Aarhus Convention. On this occasion, Aarhus Centre Sarajevo sent a notice to members of the House of Representatives of the BiH PA highlighting the illegality of the procedure and the need to either return the Draft Law to a new procedure of lawful drafting or for the House of Representatives to pass a decision to hold a public hearing, all in accordance with the Aarhus Convention. Thanks to the reaction of the Aarhus Centre, the Constitutional Commission of the BiH PA eventually decided to hold a public hearing.

AARHUS CENTRE ZENICA ENSURES PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE RENEWAL OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PERMIT FOR ARCELORMITTAL ZENICA

In 2015, the FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism renewed the environmental permit for the BOF Department of the ArcelorMittal steelworks in Zenica without a public hearing. In response, Aarhus Centre Zenica initiated an administrative dispute against the Ministry's decision to issue a permit and encouraged the City of Zenica to do the same.

As a result of the Aarhus Centre's action, the Ministry organized a meeting with all interested parties and agreed to start the procedure of issuing a new, unique permit for all ten facilities belonging to the Zenica steelworks. The Aarhus Centre participated in the process of evaluating the application and writing the permit which was issued in April 2017. The Aarhus Centre managed to change the initial text of the new environmental permit, introducing for the first time clearly defined deadlines for performing specific environmental upgrades and obligating the Ministry to regularly monitor and report on project implementation. Notwithstanding assurances that the new environmental permit would be attached to the ongoing administrative dispute, in February 2019, Sarajevo Cantonal Court rendered two judgments invalidating the environmental permit for the BOF Department. Despite the clearly defined deadlines, inaction from the steelworks operator and the Ministry continue to delay the realization of most of the environmental upgrades. Aarhus Centre Zenica will therefore continue to press for the implementation of these projects whilst closely monitoring their effects on reducing pollution.

AARHUS CENTRE TUZLA ENSURES PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT OF WASTE MANAGEMENT AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY PLANS

In 2014, Aarhus Centre Tuzla worked closely with local authorities and civil society representatives from Banovići, Kalesija, Lukavac, Tuzla and Živinice to identify environmental issues and shortcomings in the implementation of the Aarhus Convention and to address the common problems of limited waste management and air pollution. With the support of Aarhus Centre Tuzla, the Municipal Waste Management Plan for the Modrac reservoir basin and an air quality analysis and proposals for the implementation of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources were produced.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Overview

The Aarhus Centres help to strengthen public access to justice in cases pertaining to:

- access to environmental information;
- public participation in the decision-making process; and
- denial of proceedings and evidence of omissions by private individuals and public authorities, which are contrary to the provisions of domestic environmental legislation.

The Aarhus Centres provide free legal assistance to all interested parties and initiate court proceedings when necessary. Through legal clinics and workshops, the Aarhus Centres educate the public on using the law to protect environmental rights.

Success stories

AARHUS CENTRES STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL LEGAL EXPERTISE

Through the organization of a series of highly successful legal clinics, the Aarhus Centres help to build the next generation of environmental legal experts. The most recent programme, which was supported by the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and ran from September to December 2019, trained 20 law students from the universities of Sarajevo and Istočno Sarajevo through a combination of expert-led lectures and workshops focusing on the Aarhus Convention and its implementation in BiH. The initiative, which gives students both a background to the relevant theoretical and legal frameworks and enables them to practically apply the acquired knowledge through case studies, built upon previous legal clinics implemented by the Aarhus Centres in 2014 and 2017.



AARHUS CENTRE TUZLA SUPPORTS FIGHT FOR CLEAN AIR

For many years Aarhus Centre Tuzla has been supporting the citizens of Tuzla and neighbouring municipalities in their struggle against dangerous levels of air pollution. The Centre continuously provides free legal assistance and advice to the local community in order that citizens can access information and actively participate in the environmental decision-making process. The Centre also assists members of the public in accessing justice in cases of grave violation of the Aarhus Convention and domestic law. Aarhus Centre Tuzla continuously co-operates with the FBiH Ministry of Environment and Tourism in jointly removing obstacles for the successful implementation of environmental laws, with the overall aim of reducing air pollution in Tuzla and beyond.

AARHUS CENTRES FIGHT TO PROTECT BIH RIVERS

Through the EU-supported “Eko BiH” project, Aarhus Centres Banja Luka, Sarajevo and Tuzla are working to safeguard the country's rivers from the proliferation of mini hydropower plants (HPPs). The construction of more than 300 HPPs is planned just in BiH, threatening untold damage to rivers and springs, endangering drinking supplies and further depleting fish stocks.

AARHUS CENTRE BANJA LUKA HELPS TO PROTECT SUTJESKA NATIONAL PARK FROM CONSTRUCTION OF SMALL HYDROPOWER PLANT (HPP)

In 2013, a public hearing was held on drafting an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the construction of a small HPP on the Hračavka River in Sutjeska National Park, the site of one of the last remaining primeval forests in Europe. Aarhus Centre Banja Luka submitted comments to the assessment, thus ensuring that it was a party in the next proceeding. Upon the completion of public reports and public hearings, the RS Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology ordered the draft EIA to be amended in accordance with the public's comments, after which the EIA for the small HPP would be issued. In the absence of a valid spatial plan and noting that the commissioned EIA lacked sufficient detail and significantly underestimated the impact of the planned construction on local ecosystems, Aarhus Centre Banja Luka exercised its right under the third pillar of the Aarhus Convention and filed a lawsuit against the Ministry's decision.

In 2014, without a public debate, the Ministry issued a decision withdrawing approval for the original EIA and changing the installation power of the small HPP. In response, Aarhus Centre Banja Luka filed another lawsuit on the basis that such a change would have an additional environmental impact and therefore required a new EIA. In 2015, the Banja Luka District Court annulled the Ministry's decision, noting the lack of a compulsory spatial plan for the Sutjeska National Park and instructing the Ministry to undertake separate protection and development measures for each of the three zones affected by the construction as well as provide new estimates on environmental impacts in light of changes in installation power of the planned small HPP. Following the Court's decision, the Ministry suspended the procedure, recognising that the EIA could only be adopted after the development of a spatial plan for the Sutjeska National Park.

Understanding that this was not the end of the matter, Aarhus Centre Banja Luka filed a lawsuit against this decision, on the basis that the Ministry is obliged to revoke the EIA for small HPPs on the Hrčavka River, instead of just terminating the procedure. Meanwhile, the Ministry began reviewing the Court's decision, contesting that the lack of a spatial plan had no impact on the EIA since the RS National Parks Act permits the construction of power plants if they are in the RS's interest.

Currently, two court proceedings are in progress: 1) a first hearing before the Banja Luka District Court against the Ministry's decision to suspend proceedings pending the adoption of a spatial plan for Sutjeska National Park and 2) a case before the RS Supreme Court challenging the decision of the District Court to revoke the decision on the EIA. In parallel to its legal challenge, in 2015, Aarhus Centre Banja Luka launched a petition demanding that the RS National Assembly proclaim the construction of small HPPs in Sutjeska National Park without public interest. The initiative, the *first of its type* in BiH, collected 6,000 signatures, reaching the necessary number for inclusion on the agenda of the RS National Assembly.

The issuance of permits for the construction of small HPPs in Sutjeska National Park was seen by many as further evidence of the widespread destruction of protected natural areas in BiH. Local actors gathered around Aarhus Centre Banja Luka have used various means to prove that the planned construction is not in the interests of the RS, as well as to show the necessity of properly including the public in decisions relating to the environment. The Hrčavka case is an example of *precedent*, in which the Court has read and analysed the basis of an EIA decision. Similarly, the popularity of the accompanying petition shows progress in citizens exercising their rights and expressing their interests.



“BRAVE WOMEN OF KRUŠČICA” SAVE LOCAL RIVER WITH SUPPORT OF AARHUS CENTRES

A group of women from the local community of Kruščica made headlines in BiH and attracted significant media attention around the world when in August 2017 they quite literally stood up to an investor attempting to build a series of small HPPs along a vital river. The group, who would become known as the “Brave Women of Kruščica” endured violence at the hands of riot police when they blocked access to the construction site. Aarhus Centre Banja Luka was one of the first to arrive on the scene and, together with Aarhus Centre Sarajevo and other individuals and organizations gathered within the Coalition for the Protection of the Rivers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, assisted the local population in challenging the construction permits. In December 2018, after more than 500 days of occupying the village bridge 24 hours a day, local residents learned that the Cantonal Court in Novi Travnik had ruled in their favour, annulling all permits issued for the construction of Kruščica 1 and Kruščica 2 HPPs. “At the moment, we are the proudest community in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” stated Amela Zukan, one of the “Brave Women of Kruščica”. The planned HPPs would have had devastating consequences for the Kruščica River which supplies the nearby city of Zenica with water and provides a livelihood for many people living along its banks.

ZENICA STEELWORKS INVESTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AS A RESULT OF AARHUS CENTRE LEGAL ACTION

In September 2015, Aarhus Centre Zenica filed criminal charges against those responsible at ArcelorMittal Zenica for the offense of "Environmental Pollution" and against the FBiH Minister of Environment and Tourism and the Director of the FBiH Administration for Inspection Affairs for the offense of unscrupulous work in service. In April 2018, the Zenica-Doboj Cantonal Prosecutor's Office dismissed the charges against ArcelorMittal, finding there to be no "intent to commit the act". Following an unsuccessful appeal to the Chief Cantonal Prosecutor, the appeal to the FBiH Prosecutor's Office was upheld in March 2019, transferring the case in a slightly modified form to the Zenica-Doboj Cantonal Prosecutor's Office for a further investigation, which is still ongoing.

In January 2019, the Sarajevo Cantonal Prosecutor's Office decided that there was no basis to investigate the reported government officials, finding them to have made sufficient efforts to improve the situation, given the complexity of the problem. Although still under investigation, both cases have led ArcelorMittal to invest tens of millions of KM in environmental protection projects at its steel, agglomeration and heat plants.





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