

## STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

- Gordana Petkovic, Bureau member and Focal point of Arhus Convention -

### **Capacity building - Agenda Item 4 (b)**

*Innovative practice that facilitate more effective access to information, public participation and access to justice*

#### **Access to information**

The *network of eco – commissioners* of towns of the municipalities is an innovation in the organization of the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities in the Republic of Serbia. The network was established with the aim of improving communication among members, for efficient execution of responsibilities in the field of environmental protection at the local level.

The members are representatives of the cities and municipalities that are directly involved in the environmental protection including environmental protection inspection.

The first meeting of the Network of Eco –commissioners was held on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2013. It was presented a network profile of eco-commissioners and research on the problems in the enforcement of environmental protection at the local level, cooperation with the civil Sector, as well as improving environmental information on municipal Web sites and cooperation with media.

The network has 240 eco – commissioners from all cities of Serbia and they are crucial to local communities in the implementation of the laws on environmental protection and dissemination of information's in the field of environmental protection.

#### **Dialog with civil society**

Establishment of a dialogue between civil society and the Ministry of Energy, Development and the Environment of the Republic of Serbia with the proposed measure was initiated by 28 associations of civil society, and supported by 32 associations of civil society

As from 2013, the Ministry of Energy, Development and the Environment has begun to periodically hold meetings with representatives of the associations in order to include them in all activities and establish the partnership with them.

Committee for Environmental Protection of National Assembly has provided support to the document "*Basis for establishing a dialogue between civil society and the Ministry of Energy, Development and the Environment.*"

This document contains a list of guidelines and priority tasks, which certainly is not exhaustive:

- *Establish an ongoing dialogue*, such as horizontal and vertical cooperation on different levels of the system for the protection of the environment, including the strengthening of partnerships between government and NGO / civil society associations.

- *Intensive inclusion of the representatives of associations - and civil society organizations in the process of developing regulations and other documents prepared by the ministry.*

## **Public participation**

*Model legislation for enhanced public participation* in environmental decision-making at local level is, with the support of OSCE, developed by the Aarhus Centre Kragujevac legal team for systematic involvement of the civil society in decision-making processes.

The models were produced in the form of pre-drafted Municipal Assembly decisions for towns of different size, in line with national legislation. Model legislation for establishing Environmental councils introduced the “*Green seat*” in the local Assembly and the “*Green Ombudsman*”.

## **Access to justice**

In May 2013 the Ministry of Energy, Development and the Environment, with the support of the OSCE, launched a project to create the *Guide on the Right of Access to Justice in Matters related to Environmental Protection in Administrative Procedures and Administrative Disputes*. The Guide is intended for civil servants, judges dealing with administrative judicial matters, students of environmental law, representatives of civil society and general public.

*Planned activities/projects in 2014* are the following:

- *Training for judges* on the implementation of the legal protection of environmental issues in the RS where the material will be Practicum on access to justice in environmental matters in administrative proceedings and disputes in cooperation with the OSCE.
- Realization of the project of making *Practicum on access to justice in environmental matters in civil and criminal proceedings* in cooperation with the OSCE.