



Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia

Environmental Protection Strategy – Green Agenda for the Republic of Serbia

**Implementation of the Aarhus Convention with a focus on
involving the public**

**especially groups or people (children) in vulnerable
situations in the process of developing the Environmental
Protection Strategy**

**Geneva, December
2024.**

Introduction

- ▶ The Environmental Protection Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2024 to 2033 - the Green Agenda for Serbia represents the overarching public policy document in the field of environmental protection.
- ▶ This Strategy directs measures and activities aimed at the Green Agenda, carbon neutrality, sustainable development, natural resource protection, pollution reduction, and improvement of the quality of life for all citizens, in line with the Sofia Declaration signed by the Republic of Serbia in November 2020.
- ▶ This also includes attracting financial resources from European Union funds and other international sources to ensure the necessary infrastructure and resources for implementing environmental protection measures.
- ▶ Sustainable development goals have also been integrated in the Strategy, having in mind that these goals were established by the UN Resolution in 2015 – Agenda for Sustainable development 2030.

Process of the Strategy preparation

- ▶ Process of the Strategy preparation was widely participative.
- ▶ The working group for the development of this planning document comprised representatives of the institutions, organizations, the business sector, academic community, and civil society organizations.
- ▶ There were 5 Workshops organized for the Working group and huge number of bilateral meetings (over 80) in order to identify issues, to establish objectives for all pillars and to define measures and activities.
- ▶ Draft Strategy and Action plan are published on the web site <https://ekonsultacije.gov.rs/> as well as on the Ministry of Environmental Protection web site.
- ▶ Further consultations with the stakeholders are ongoing.
- ▶ A formal procedure follows in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Government.
- ▶ A public hearing is scheduled for December 4, 2024, after which all comments/suggestions/remarks will be considered. Adoption by the Government in the first quarter of 2025.

Process of the Strategy preparation

- **Support for the development of the Strategy was provided within the framework of the "EU for the Green Agenda in Serbia" project. This project, with technical and financial support of the EU and in partnership with the Ministry of Environmental Protection, is implemented by UNDP in cooperation with the Embassy of Sweden and the European Investment Bank (EIB), with additional financial support ensured by the governments of Sweden, Switzerland, and the Republic of Serbia.**

Structure of the Environment Protection Strategy

- ▶ The structure of the Strategy corresponds to the structure of the Green Agenda and encompasses all areas within the five pillars of the Green Agenda:
- ▶ Decarbonization and Climate change: focusing on reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapting to altered climatic conditions, alongside more efficient energy use and transitioning to cleaner and renewable energy sources.
- ▶ Circular Economy: Emphasizing industrial symbiosis, waste utilization, responsible recycling, sustainable production, innovation, eco-design, green public procurement, and efficient resource use.
- ▶ Pollution Reduction: Improvement of air, water, and soil quality, reducing industrial pollution, managing risks, handling chemicals, reducing environmental noise, and managing ionizing and non-ionizing radiation.
- ▶ Biodiversity and Ecosystem Protection: Protecting and sustainably managing natural resources, including sustainable forest management, protected areas, and wildlife.
- ▶ Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development: Addressing the environmental impact of agriculture, food safety, sustainable food production, organic food.
- ▶ **Horizontal issues**

Structure of the Environment Protection Strategy

- ▶ The Strategy has been developed in line with the principles and pillars of the Green Agenda and in line with:
 - The Law on Planning System
 - The Law on Environmental Protection
 - Other relevant sectoral laws.

- ▶ **The Strategy has:**
 - **6 overall objectives**
 - **17 specific objectives**
 - **76 measures**
 - **174 indicators.**

Horizontal issues

- ▶ **Measure 6.1.6.** Raising the awareness and level of knowledge of interested parties and the public about the importance of the environment, sustainable development and climate change.
- ▶ It is planned to develop a program and conduct training in the area of the Green Agenda for various interested parties and sensitive social groups, and to promote and support activities aimed at raising awareness of the importance of environmental protection and climate change (campaigns, public opinion research, etc.).
- ▶ **Measure 6.1.7.** Inclusion of gender and anti-discrimination perspectives in public policies, plans and projects in the field of environmental protection
- ▶ The measure also includes the collection and analysis of gender-sensitive data (sorted by gender, age and other personal characteristics) in relation to environmental issues and in areas that are relevant for monitoring progress in achieving gender equality and eliminating discrimination in the field of environmental protection as well as preparation gender-responsive budget.

Horizontal issues

- ▶ **Measure 6.2.3.** Raising the capacity of stakeholders to participate in decision-making processes on issues related to the environment
- ▶ In order to increase the capacity to exercise the right to participate in the decision-making process, it is necessary to develop guidelines for the identification and early involvement of the interested public (especially civil society organizations **and sensitive social groups**) for the authorities responsible for the protection of the environment and the economy in decision-making processes on issues in in connection with the environment.

Focus on children as vulnerable group

- ▶ Analyses conducted at the global level show that children are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change and environmental degradation.
- ▶ Their sensitivity is heightened by the impact of air, water, and soil pollution, as well as the consequences of climate change, which can have a serious impact on their health and well-being.
- ▶ In Strategy, we pay special attention to children, who are the most sensitive group of the population, as recognized in the Guidelines of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, which emphasize the importance of protecting children's rights in the context of the environment and climate change.

Focus on children as vulnerable group

- ▶ Accordingly, this strategy includes additional measures to support vulnerable categories of the population within the policy of environmental protection and mitigation of climate change.
- ▶ Emphasis is placed on protecting the health of children and other vulnerable groups, through measures that include monitoring air and water quality, reducing exposure to dangerous chemicals and creating a safe environment for all residents of the Republic of Serbia.

Focus on children as vulnerable group

- ▶ **Measure 2.2.2.** Integrating the safe management of chemicals into the concept of circular economy development
- ▶ The safe management of chemicals in the circular flow of materials is in support of the development policy to achieve a non-toxic environment from the perspective of the circular economy. As part of this measure, a Road Map on the management of chemicals in the concept of circular economy development will be developed, as well as the implementation of training for industry and recyclers as well as **the preparation of a gender analysis and the inclusion of gender-sensitive groups with a special focus on youth and children** (link to measure 6.1.6. of this Strategy) (link to measure 3.4., special goal 3. from the Circular Economy Development Program in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022 - in 2024).

Focus on children as vulnerable group

Measure 3.1.1. Faster replacement of existing heating devices in households with new devices that meet the requirements of the Eco-Design Directive with financial incentives

- In order to monitor the impact of polluted air on health, within this measure it is necessary to **establish a system for monitoring respiratory and other diseases caused by air pollution in children and adults and to establish a database.**
- **Education** about air protection and quality, information to raise public awareness about the importance of air quality in open and closed spaces, and the preparation of brochures about the effects of polluted air on health and recommendations for action are also important.

Focus on children as vulnerable group

- ▶ The implementation of the measures of the Strategy can affect the mitigation of major negative impacts on women, children, the elderly, young people and other sensitive social groups, caused by climate change, water shortages, land degradation, inadequate sanitary conditions, water, air and food pollution, etc.
- ▶ Additionally, a better position and greater influence of women, young and vulnerable social groups on decision-making on environmental protection issues and in all other areas related to sustainable development is expected, such as energy, water management, traffic, urban planning, agriculture, etc.

ACTION PLAN

- ▶ **3.1.1.4.** Establishing a system for monitoring respiratory and other diseases caused by air pollution in children and adults and forming a database.
- ▶ **3.2.1.6.** Establishment of a system for monitoring children's and adults' illnesses due to chemical defects in drinking water.

The development path of public involvement / organization of civil society and non-governmental organizations

- ▶ in Serbia have a special procedure for the inclusion of civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations in the decision-making process when it comes to public policy documents, ie strategic documents.
- ▶ This selection is made based on established criteria and is carried out by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, and this method of inclusion has proven to be successful.
- ▶ In the process of creating the Strategy, several were included (there are 4 civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations they passed this procedure).
- ▶ However, through a special Volvox project supported by the European Commission, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations conducted a parallel process and thus included all those who were not part of the official procedure. This is important because in this way we enabled a more transparent process.

The development path of public involvement / organization of civil society and non-governmental organizations

- ▶ The non-governmental organization **Center for Children's Rights** is very active in Serbia and works in the field of children's rights.
- ▶ **Publications:**
- ▶ <https://cpd.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Istrazivanje-Pravosudje-po-meri-deteta-iz-ugla-dece-i-mladih.pdf>
- ▶ <https://cpd.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Analiza-zakonodavstva-Republike-Srbije-iz-perspektive-prava-deteta-na-zdravu-zivotnu-sredinu-2.pdf>
- ▶ <https://cpd.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Prava-deteta-na-zdravu-zivotnu-sredinu-u-Republici-Srbiji-1.pdf>
- ▶ **UNICEF- Analysis of the climate situation and its impact on children in Serbia**
- ▶ <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/media/18356/file/CLAC%20izvestaj.pdf>

CONCLUSIONS

- ▶ In Serbia, there is no systematic legislative framework in children's right to a healthy environment, but that this area is regulated through a legislative framework that regulates various areas of environmental protection or other legal areas.
- ▶ The Environmental Protection Strategy (will be) is one of the most important documents for the sustainable development of the Republic of Serbia. It represents a comprehensive umbrella document in the field of environmental protection, with which all other strategic and planning documents should be harmonized. It will define the directions of environmental development in accordance with the five pillars (six) of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.
- ▶ In this document (the Strategy), special emphasis is placed on strengthening the role and inclusion of vulnerable social groups, among which children are a priority.
- ▶ It is still a public national document, and everyone is welcome to contribute to it.
- ▶ Civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations have publicly praised the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia for implementing a transparent process of public involvement in this process.

THANK YOU FOR ATTENTION!



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