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# Environment and Climate Regional Accession Network (ECRAN)

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Report on ECRAN  
Environment and  
Climate Forum:  
Preparatory Meeting  
2015, Albania

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07 May 2015, Tirana

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**ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMA REGIONAL NETWORK FOR ACCESSION - ECRAN**

**PREPARATORY MEETING REPORT**  
**ECRAN ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE FORUM:**  
**07 MAY 2015, TIRANA, ALBANIA**



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## I. Background/Rationale

The European Commission started a new round of dialogue with the environmental NGOs in the enlargement region – Environmental and Climate Forum (ECF). The ECF is now integral part of the ECRAN project. The aim of the forum is to strengthen the role of public participation in the approximation and accession process. In doing so, the ECF provides wide ranging opportunities for the civil society and its active involvement in the approximation process, assist in capacity development of the NGO sector and provide opportunities for improving the stakeholders dialogue. More information is available at <http://www.ecranetwork.org/ECF/What-is-Environment-and-Climate-Forum>. Besides high level dialogue between the EC and NGOs (and as a part of the preparations for the dialogue), national NGOs organise in – country preparatory meetings.

Preparatory activities for regional annual meetings between the EC and NGOs include organisation of country preparatory meetings organised by selected national NGOs within ECRAN project. These country preparatory meetings are aimed to create space for discussion between authorities, decision makers and civil society representatives and to provide inputs for the topics to be discussed at the regional annual meeting between ECF and the European Commission.

Topic for the paper (Progress Monitoring) was identified and decided by the ECF NGOs at 2014 Annual ECF NGOs Meeting in Brussels in November 2014. The ECF will in 2015 facilitate common national positions of the civil society on the Progress Reports.

## II. Objectives of the training

### *General objectives*

- To create space for discussion between authorities, decision makers and civil society representatives;
- To discuss progress in the negotiations, identify key challenges and explore possibilities for the national dialogue on the state, perspective and future on the EU enlargement process;
- To provide inputs into agenda for the annual meeting in Brussels between ECF and the European Commission.



### III. Highlights from the meeting

#### **Introduction**

The second preparatory meeting in Albania in the Framework of ECRAN was organized on the 7th of May 2015, in the premises of Ministry of Environment (MoE) in Albania. The meeting was focused in discussing the issues raised by the progress report 2014 and more specifically the Environment and Climate Change chapters, where officials from the Ministry of Environment as well as representatives from Civil society Sector were invited to deliver presentations and case studies on each of the topics mentioned in the progress report. The topics to be discussed in the agenda were as follows:

1. Contribution in progress report
2. Horizontal legislation ( Environmental Impact Assessment and Public participation in decision making);
3. Air quality and climate change;
4. Waste management;
5. Water quality;
6. Nature protection;
7. Industrial pollution control and risk management;
8. Chemicals.

The meeting started with the welcoming words from Ms. Ermelinda Mahmutaj, from EDEN Centre which after a presentation of the ECRAN program and after the presentation of the topics of the agenda to be discussed during the day passed the floor to Mrs. Adriana Sokoli, Head of Projects and Integration Directory in the same time the Focal point of ECRAN in the Ministry of Environment.

The presentations session started with a presentation on the NGOs Contribution in the 2014 progress report, prepared by Co-Plan. The officials of the MoE delivered their presentations on chapter 27 starting from 10.30 AM until 02.00 PM

The meeting was organized with presentations in power point, followed by discussions, case studies, suggestion, questions and recommendations from the participants.

Participants of the meeting were representatives from the MoE, as well as active NGOs in the environmental field, which scope of work is nature protection, waste management, industry monitoring, etc.

#### **Assessment of the country progress in selected areas**

The representatives of the MoE made a very comprehensive overview of the legislation regarding each of the topics, mentioning all the progress/initiatives undertaken from the progress report 2014 up to date, to facilitate the process of the implementation of the legislation. The point of view expressed by the participants was that the legislation is well transposed in Albania, the environmental legislation is very rich and several improvements happened in the last year as there is a more understanding in dividing the managerial functions from the control functions; Ms. Sokoli mentioned that there was some progress toward the forest issue as within 2015 will be approved the law for forests. In February 2015 was established the Agency for the Protected Areas. In the process of the Environmental Impact Assessment, the silence improvement of the EIA, it is not anymore in force, it is needed a strict reply



and the environmental experts are in a new process of certification. Regarding to public participation, according to the responsible person in the MoE for public information, a new portal is available from December 2014, for public complains, regarding the environmental issues.

All the participants mentioned the important role of ECRAN and its support on trainings delivered in absorbing structural and IPA funds. Participants appreciated a lot the initiative of ECRAN to consider and consult the NGO sector.

From the discussions were raised some crucial issues from the NGOs among the most important was mentioned the citizens lack of knowledge regarding environmental legislation and their rights accordingly (rights, duties and responsibilities, which makes them not to react for environment problem) in this way more work is needed to be done especially from media for informing. Civil society representatives expressed the need for more collaboration between Ministries and Civil Society Organizations, while the representatives from the MoE expressed their willingness and readiness for better improving the communication. Another issue discussed by the representatives was that it should have more collaboration within the directories of the same institution. The participants mentioned also that there is lack of information flow between the institutions; lack of data reporting and lack of data transparency. Another issue that was raised was that there are not enough funds for fulfilling all the measures that the law in force aims in achieving, and not enough staff capacities as well as lack of appropriate structures ex. laboratories or other material instruments for facilitating the implementation of the legislation. Regarding the Forests, there is a consideration to draft a dedicating Law on Forests and that there is lack of up to date data available for forest.

The representative of the MoE, Mr. Rrezart Fshazi, has proposed the establishment of a forest Committee in ECRAN and he also requested a wider involvement of NGOs in ECRAN 3.

### ***Cases of problematic practice, legislation, policies or investment***

The laws in written side are in improving and in the same time there are some initiatives that help their implementation. For the law on public information, there are made several improvements, but the present NGOs at the meeting (the most active in the environmental field in Albania) complained for not receiving an invitation for the public hearing for the Environmental permit for the construction of the Incinerator in Elbasan. The public hearing was organized in December 2014 and seemed that other NGOs, apart from those in the meeting, were present in this consultation for the incinerator. Regarding the law for nature protection, the issue was raised for the Hydropower plants construction in the protected areas, when often happens that the developer changed their plans from the ones approved, and as a consequence protected areas are being destroyed. On the mentioned cases were the construction of Hydro power at the protected National Park Shebenik-Jabllanice and in Vjosa River. Forest is a crucial issue for which there is an abuse as there are no latest studies and data. Animals are kept in difficult conditions and the lack of good services was mentioned by the NGOs.

The water competencies were passed from the MoE to the Ministry of Agriculture but still these two ministries are not definitively clear on the actual competences on the sector. As a consequence this way the in force of water laws is progressing not with the appropriate rhythm, although for the Water quality several projects are in place and several studies are going on.

For air quality and climate change, there is still not a specific division between the competences of the



National Agency of Environment and Public Health institute for air monitoring, and there are no plans for air quality management in local level. Although there is a positive steps as Albania this year will submit its INDC (Intended Nationally Determined Contributions).

***Positive example from the country***

Among NGO and government good examples during the meeting were:

- It is created the National Register of Water Resources Permits Usage
- It has initiated the process of preparing the National Strategy for Integrated Management of Water Resources
- It has begun the process of establishing the National Electronic Cadastre of Water Resources
- Within 2015 will be approved the law for forests
- Albania this year will submit its INDC (Intended Nationally Determined Contributions), in line for a sustainable development and energy security. The ministry is
- Was created ( December 2014) an online portal for public complains for environmental issues
- Deny of construction of two/three hydropower plants in Shebenik – Jabllanica National Park ( at the protected area) as a result of many protests organized by the civil society and local people living in the area.
- As a result of intensive watchdogging of a leather company in Berat (a city in the South Albania) by the watchdog network “An eye for environment!” the company invested in filters and less polluting operating technology. Also the company invested in building the Health center for its employees who need to do monthly health checks. This action was also supported by more frequent inspections of the Inspectorate for environment.
- The EITI office included in its working groups are representative organization working on environment for the first time this year, acknowledging in that way the important role of environmental CSOs in fulfilling the aim of EITI.
- Environmental NGOs issued last year a report on the assessment of healthcare waste administration in 5 cities in the country. This report was the first report on healthcare waste management issues which was made public and exposed all the lack in administration and implementation of law. After this report and media investigation on the issue, the Inspectorate of Health and Inspectorate of Environment intensified inspections and now most of the healthcare waste producers have a contract with a healthcare waste treatment company, have environmental permit for their activity and two treatment companies were suspended from activity because they were not operating based on the legal standards. On the other hand, the Inspectorate of Environment involved in its inspection units the environmental NGOs which developed the assessment report. So the inspection was a team composed of environment inspectorate and environmental NGOs. Both parties considered this cooperation very fruitful and an approach to be followed for other environmental issues.



### **Logistics and ECF-ECRAN support**

The meeting was coordinated from the local organization, EDEN center, which was in direct communication with the ECF-ECRAN team. EDEN center kept the communication with the MoE and organized a physical meeting before the preparatory meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> May, MoE was supportive in terms of premises facilitations, agenda drafting and finalization, taking responsibilities for speaker announcement and securing the presentations.

EDEN center, Ekovement and Co-plan collaborated in term of drafting the agenda and making the announcement for the meeting. Co-Plan was responsible as well for one presentation during the meeting. ECF-ECRAN, was very present during all the preparation of the meeting, logistically and agenda.

### ***Further Recommendation***

As a general remark, the law in place for environment in Albania, was considered as very comprehensive but there is a gap in implementation, collaboration and transparency.



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## ANNEX I – Agenda

Thursday, 07 May, 2015

Start	Finish	Topic	Facilitator/Speaker	Sub topic/Content
9:45	10:00	<b>Registration</b>		
10:00	10:30	Introduction	Ermelinda Mahmutaj EDEN center  Richard Filcak  Ardiana Sokoli	<p><b>a. Welcome words and opening remarks</b></p> <p>presentation of preparatory meeting purpose</p> <p><b>b. Short introduction of the participants</b></p>
10:30	10:40	Themes to be discussed	Ermelinda Mahmutaj	Short introduction of the thematic to be discussed
10:40	11:15	Presentation and discussions	Teida Shehi, Co-Plan  Ardiana Sokoli, Ministry of Environment, ECRAN Focal Point (tbc)	<p><b>a. Where Albania is after explanatory and bilateral screening for Chapter 27: Environment and Climate Change</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. NGO position (REC representative)</li> <li>2. Government Position (representative of Ministry of Environment)</li> </ol> <p><b>b. Questions and answers related the topics and positions presented</b></p>
11:15	11:30	<b>Coffee Break</b>		
11:30	12:45	Presentation and discussions	Representative of Ministry of European Integration (tbc)  Dorarta Hyseni, NDI Albania (tbc)	<p><b>a. Progress reporting for 2015</b></p> <p>Presentation of the main points and steps in the Progress Reporting</p>



Start	Finish	Topic	Facilitator/Speaker	Sub topic/Content
				<b>b. Questions and answers related to the topics and positions presented</b>
12:45	13:30	Presentation and discussions	Representative of Ministry of Environment (tbc)	<b>a. Horizontal issues and accession process</b> Presentation of compliance on EU directives  <b>b. Questions and answers related to the topic</b>
13:30	14:30	Group discussion and follow ups		Short reporting of participation in ECRAN capacity building meetings-trainings.  Group work – follow up initiatives of this preparatory meeting
<b>14:30</b>		<b>Official closing of the meeting and Lunch after</b>		



## ANNEX II – Participants

First Name	Family Name	Institution Name	Country	Email
Ermelinda	Mahmutaj	EDEN	Albania	<a href="mailto:Ermelinda.mahmutaj@eden-al.org">Ermelinda.mahmutaj@eden-al.org</a>
Lira	Hakani	EDEN	Albania	<a href="mailto:Lira.hakani@eden-al.org">Lira.hakani@eden-al.org</a>
Jonida	Mamaj	EDEN	Albania	<a href="mailto:Jonida.mamaj@eden-al.org">Jonida.mamaj@eden-al.org</a>
Florenca	Korbi	EDEN	Albania	<a href="mailto:Florenca.korbi@eden-al.org">Florenca.korbi@eden-al.org</a>
Ahmet	Mehmeti	Klubi Ekologjik Elbasan	Albania	<a href="mailto:ahmeteccel@hotmail.com">ahmeteccel@hotmail.com</a>
Teida	Shehi	Co-Plan	Albania	<a href="mailto:Teida.shehi@gmail.com">Teida.shehi@gmail.com</a>
Endri	Haxhiraj	IEP	Albania	<a href="mailto:endri@iep-al.orh">endri@iep-al.orh</a>
Xhemal	Mato	Ekolevizja	Kosovo*	<a href="mailto:xhemalmato@gmail.com">xhemalmato@gmail.com</a>
Gentiana	Decolli	Per Mireqenie Socjale dhe Mjedisore	Albania	<a href="mailto:natyraberat@yahoo.com">natyraberat@yahoo.com</a>
Olsi	Nika	Eco Albania	Albania	<a href="mailto:o.nika@ecoalbania.org">o.nika@ecoalbania.org</a>
Rezart	Kapedani	REC	Albania	<a href="mailto:rkapedani@rec.org">rkapedani@rec.org</a>
Arion	Sauku	Mileukontakt	Formal Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	<a href="mailto:orion.sauku@mileukontakt.org">orion.sauku@mileukontakt.org</a>
Marsida	Harizaj	Ministry of Environment	Albania	<a href="mailto:Marsida.harizaj@more.gov.al">Marsida.harizaj@more.gov.al</a>
Polikron	Horeshka	Ministry of Environment	Albania	<a href="mailto:Polikron.horeshka@moe.gov.al">Polikron.horeshka@moe.gov.al</a>

\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo\* declaration of independence.



First Name	Family Name	Institution Name	Country	Email
Rrezart	Fshazi	Ministry of Environment	Albania	<a href="mailto:Rrezart.fshazi@moe.gov.al">Rrezart.fshazi@moe.gov.al</a>
Silvamina	Alshabani	Ministry of Environment	Albania	<a href="mailto:Silvanima.alshabani@moe.gov.al">Silvanima.alshabani@moe.gov.al</a>
Sabina	Cenamერი	Ministry of Environment	Albania	<a href="mailto:Sabina.cenamერი@moe.gov.al">Sabina.cenamერი@moe.gov.al</a>
Valbona	Myhedin	Ministry of Environment	Albania	<a href="mailto:Valbona.myhedin@moe.gov.al">Valbona.myhedin@moe.gov.al</a>
Blerina	Zerani	Ministry of Environment	Albania	<a href="mailto:Blerina.zerani@moe.gov.al">Blerina.zerani@moe.gov.al</a>
Jonila	Haxhillari	Ministry of Environment	Albania	<a href="mailto:Jonila.haxhillari@moe.gov.al">Jonila.haxhillari@moe.gov.al</a>
Laureta	Dibra	Ministry of Environment	Albania	<a href="mailto:Laureta.dibra@moe.gov.al">Laureta.dibra@moe.gov.al</a>
Viola	Saliaga	Ministry of Environment	Albania	<a href="mailto:Viola.saliaga@moe.gov.al">Viola.saliaga@moe.gov.al</a>
Rovena	Agalliu	Ministry of Environment	Albania	<a href="mailto:Rovena.agalliu@moe.gov.al">Rovena.agalliu@moe.gov.al</a>
Elma	Nushi		Albania	<a href="mailto:elmahushi@yahoo.com">elmahushi@yahoo.com</a>
Demir	Osmani	Public association for road and environment safety	Albania	<a href="mailto:demirosmani@hotmail.com">demirosmani@hotmail.com</a>
Presilda	Zito		Albania	<a href="mailto:Presilda.zito@hotmail.com">Presilda.zito@hotmail.com</a>
Emirjeta	Adhami	WWF/INCA	Albania	<a href="mailto:Emi-adhami@hotmail.com">Emi-adhami@hotmail.com</a>
Mehmet	Metaj	Albaforest	Albania	<a href="mailto:albaforest@gmail.com">albaforest@gmail.com</a>
Dritan	Gorica	URI	Albania	<a href="mailto:dgorica@uri.org.al">dgorica@uri.org.al</a>
Shklelqim	Hajno	AJMMI Agjencia	Albania	



### ANNEX III – Presentations (under separate cover)

Presentations can be downloaded from:

[http://www.ecranetwork.org/Files/ECF\\_PM\\_Albania\\_Materials\\_May\\_2015\\_Tirana.zip](http://www.ecranetwork.org/Files/ECF_PM_Albania_Materials_May_2015_Tirana.zip)



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