

The Third Meeting of National Convention about Environment, Work Group "Environment"

Meeting of the National Convention about European Union was held on February 26th 2014, in the City Hall in Niš, as a part of the project Know How 2 Act. The topic of this meeting was the Results and Perspectives of Improving Cross Border Cooperation and its Importance for Environment and the Chapter 27. The speakers were Mr. **Žarko Ranković**, City Councilman of the City of Niš, Mr. **Miodrag Gluščević** from the Standing Conference of Cities and Municipalities, Mrs. **Maja Jovanović** from the Joint Technical Secretariat, Mr. **Ivan Pavlović** from the Directorate for Agriculture and Development of Villages, professor doctor **Srđan Glišović** from Faculty for Protection on Work, and Mr. **Dejan Milošević** from the Center for Development of Civil Society PROTECTA. Internal expert was Professor **Dragoljub Todić**.

The meeting began with the analysis of the status and activities of the city of Niš in the field of environmental protection. According to Mr. **Žarko Ranković**, City Councilman, Niš is one of very active local self-governments. "For a number of years series of screening programs have been carried out, which refer to the measurement of certain parameters significant for evaluation, for example air pollution, the level of pollen, etc. All that is provided by regulations in Niš is measured and monitored regardless of budget and budgetary issues".



Series of problems that this city has, such as city dump, the unresolved problems of waste water, stray dogs, are also in the focus of the city. He pointed out that the city has good cooperation with foreign partners, such as the Austrian Society for the Animal Protection with whom they work on a project to build shelters for dogs. Niš is the only city in the Balkans that has adopted a strategy about safety considering the concept in a wider sense to include economic, ecological and social aspects of the problem, not only protection from emergency situations. As part of cross-border cooperation and protocols on cooperation, he pointed out that such protocols were signed with Sofia and Vienna, and relations between partner sides were developed.

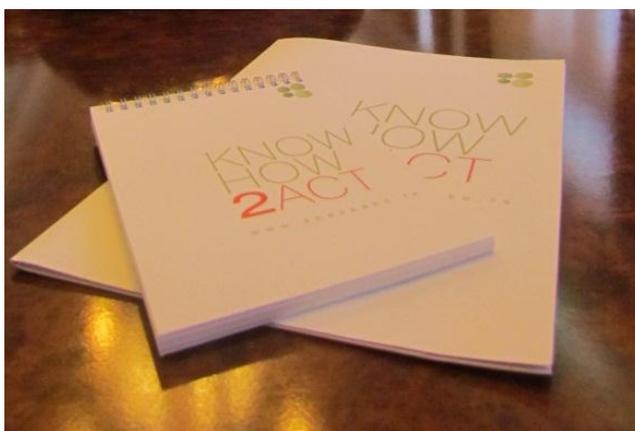
Internal Expert of this Working Group, Professor **Dragoljub Todić**, referred to the (non)existence of the developed methodology when it comes to measuring and evaluating the results of cross-border cooperation. On the first intergovernmental conference Serbia stated that the process of programming IPA funds was successfully implemented, assets were targeted and that the overall impression was that we have experienced positive absorption. However, adequate measures are brought into question. Reviews needed to be more precise, to be supported by benchmarks, and trustworthy for decision-making. About the results of the cross-border cooperation, we could be informed through different documents such as international contracts. Even though there is a problem of comparison of legal systems of the partners in the contracts. "More concrete estimations of the results of cross-border cooperation have to be made in the reports about project implementation. Since the very moment the goals and indicators were set, they have to be systematically followed. In practice, evaluation is reduced to statements such as *the awareness of the citizens is improved* which is not defined precisely".

Mrs. Maja Jovanovic from the local office of the Joint Technical Secretariat, dealt with specific examples of these projects and their effects. This office deals with the monitoring of the projects that have been approved through the CBS program Serbia Bulgaria. Funds approved for 2013 year will be spent on agreed projects which is the most important goal that the office wants to achieve. The thing they stress especially is the need for CSOs to submit their feedback concerning what they see as priorities, so that office could know for what they should ask for money. Although in comparison to other cross-border programs this one of the most active and still in the evaluation process, there is not enough co-operation with the potential beneficiaries on the field.

Mr. **Miodrag Glušević** from the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities presented a study that was conducted at the end of last year, as well as a SWOT analysis of the state of capacity of local government in terms of implementation of regulations in the field of environmental protection. He also referred to the first CO2 neutral conference, on the topic of integration and accession to the EU in the field of environment and the impact on the local level.

Mr. **Ivan Pavlovic** from the Department of Agriculture of the City of Niš said that Department had been recognized as an actor that had experience in both cross-border cooperation and the environmental protection. This Department has a team of people who, in addition to engagement in the agriculture, have also had experience in environmental protection, which is very important, because one

pillar of the very Common Agricultural Policy of EU rests on this segment. "All that we introduce in the annual work programs, long-term planning and cross-border cooperation is based on the environmental protection". Pavlovic also expressed his dissatisfaction with the insufficient activism and public participation, especially referring to participation of organizations in the development of policies related to agriculture and environment, having in mind that the policy makers were us and not someone else, meaning the EU.



Professor **Srdjan Glišović** the Faculty for Safety at Work, recommended that in the formation of project teams the multidisciplinary approach had to be used, and that teams should be constantly working on improvement of their skills. Mr. **Dejan Milosevic** from the PROTECTA drew attention to the fact that sometimes too much attention was devoted to administration instead of the very implementation of projects in the field. He also presented the project *Spirit*, which includes picking mushrooms, herbs, mountain trails, strengthening the capacity of Svrljig Municipality, which is one of the poorest municipalities in Serbia. This project will be implemented thoroughly in compliance with the EU legislation on green procurement.

The European Movement in Serbia in collaboration with the Belgrade Open School, the Civil Society Development Centre PROTECTA and the UNECOOP, with the support of Royal Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade, is implementing a project KnowHow2Act („Znam kako da delujem“) with a goal to improve and increase participation of civil society in the process of decision making in the field of local environmental protection in the EU integration process. An important segment of the project is realization of sessions of National Convent's, "Environment" Working Group.

