The REC

The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) is an international organisation with a mission to assist in solving environmental problems. Among other activities, the REC supports civil society organisations (CSOs) to be more effective in their crucial role in the democratic process. The REC supports CSOs through grants programmes, building capacities and organisational viability, and strengthening networking. During its 19 years, the REC has distributed more than EUR 12 million to more than 5,500 grants to environmental CSOs. In South Eastern Europe, regional and national grants schemes — including those carried out under the SECTOR project — have been used successfully to support start-ups of CSOs during the last five years.

The SECTOR project

April 2006 marked the launch of the framework programme SECTOR (Supporting Environmental Civil Society Organisations in South Eastern Europe), which helps governments perform their role as important drivers of community development in the field of environmental protection. Its mission was to support civil society organisations (CSOs) to push society toward more sustainable development and improved living conditions in cities.

In beneficiary area cover Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo (as defined by UNSCR 1244). Running from April 2006 to April 2010, it has an overall budget of EUR 3.7 million, provided by the Swiss International Development Cooperation Agency (SDC). Results of an assessment survey, based on a questionnaire completed by groups in the region, stable interviewees and background data, were presented in an updated directory of environmental CSOs. The identified development needs were then addressed through activities falling under the other three core project components:

- Organisational viability: The REC developed an organisational assessment and development planning tool which was used by 56 CSOs. It helped them to better organize, and get better results from, their activities, become more sustainable, and better address the concerns of their communities. Twenty-five groups received seed money to implement selected components of their development plans.
- Project support (grants): This grant-making scheme identified and supported projects initiated by CSOs in the target countries at the national and regional level.
- Networking assistance and training: The Master Class training series assisted 118 students in strengthening capacities in environmental lobbying, working with independent media, facilitating public participation, doing advocacy work and improving government and industry. Two regional CSO networks received grants to begin scaling up their organizational development plans.

National SECTOR grants

The national grants were distributed in three rounds and supported 199 projects in total. Announcements run from 2006 to 2010, with a total of EUR 590,408 distributed. The major share of the projects included waste management, energy conservation, sanitation, urban greening and urban transport.

By theme, the biggest share of projects — 40 percent — addressed waste-related issues, as it was identified as most of the country as the most pressing urban problems. Project activities focused on awareness raising and education to influence citizens’ attitudes and behaviour. Along with campaigns on the classic topic of recycling and reusing containers and other products, many CSOs tried innovative approaches such as setting up drop-in centres to consider reusable shopping bags, teaching households to reduce waste consumption and educating members of the Roma community on waste collection. Thirty-seven percent of the projects focused on awareness raising and education to influence citizens’ behaviour in accordance with new laws. Projects involved recycling, composting and the cleaning of illegal dump sites. Transport and energy conservation: Twenty-five percent of the funded projects, receiving a total of EUR 33,500, went to the area. Activities included cleaning up illegal dump sites and reclaiming abandoned lots for use as playgrounds and places for recreation and relaxation. A group of local youth clubs was trained to start urban agriculture and another area was made into a natural park where students can learn about subjects such as dendrology.

Lessons learnt

- It is evident that local populations are willing to contribute to the improvement of urban environments. They participated in public hearings and debates and attended educational trainings organized by CSOs to discuss project activities. The CSOs that carried out the projects demonstrated great dedication in providing all relevant information for promoting their activities. They worked on improving collaboration between stakeholders of all types by enticing them to get involved in environmental protection and sustainable urban development.
- Confidence was strengthened between partners during the implementation of the projects, particularly between CSOs and city governments. This builds for further cooperation in follow-up project activities.

The implementation of the SECTOR National Grants Programme strengthened CSOs capacities, particularly in the preparation of project proposals and financial and narrative reports. This boosts their funding prospects with other donors.

DISTRIBUTION OF NATIONAL GRANTS PROJECTS BY THEME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All countries’ projects</th>
<th>FYR Macedonia’s projects</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water management</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste management</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water and sanitation management</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transport and urban planning</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waste management</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waste management</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy consumption</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste management</td>
<td>17%</td>
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Grants in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Macedonian part of the scheme resulted in the awarding of 24 project grants totalling EUR 172,595. Activities were grouped into the following areas:

- Waste management: Forty-one percent of the projects, receiving a total of EUR 63,000, went to this area. Activities included cleaning up illegal dump sites and reclaiming abandoned lots for use as playgrounds and places for recreation and relaxation. A group of local youth clubs was trained to start urban agriculture and another area was made into a natural park where students can learn about subjects such as dendrology.
- Transport and energy conservation: Thirty-seven percent of the projects focused on awareness raising and education to influence citizens’ behaviour in accordance with new laws. Projects involved recycling, composting and the cleaning of illegal dump sites.
Setting an example worth recycling

The Civil Environmental Forum has won a project worth EUR 2,109 in funding to create sustainable waste management for the Municipality of Gjorce Petrov. The base aim was to decrease the quantity of waste originating from the municipality’s waste stream. One particular activity, a workshop was organized which students of a primary school in Gjorce Petrov were more motivated to attend than any other waste treatment. First collection for the recovery of used metals, paper and glass waste has been established in the city. The quantities of recycling increased, thus maintaining the recycling rate. The plan and programme for integrated waste management was developed by the Forum. This document contains the description of the quantity and distribution of the quantities of recycling. The plan and programme was developed and written out to the students and pupils of the City’s Secondary Technical School and the six-year-old Gjorce Petrov Primary School.

For the purpose of preparation of the plan and programme, site visits to various locations within the municipality were organized. This was a significant activity for the students and pupils of the two educational institutions.

The project's success has made it an ideal model for home-composting activities in other cities throughout the country. Due to the high level of interest among the public in home composting, the CSO foresees the delivery of an additional 20 composting bins. Thanks to the project’s webpage, 14 schools in 11 communities followed suit by starting their own recycling programmes at their schools. A teacher at a school in Gostivar initiated recycling of PET packaging waste as part of the regular practical curriculum of the high school. To ensure the sustainability of the project, it was proposed that the received through the project would be used exclusively for the recycling programmes at their schools.

During the course of the project, 7,000 students received brochures on separate waste collection and more than 5,000 students attended elective classes on the subject. Another 1,000 parents were also informed through children who attended the classes or learned about the project via the internet or printed or electronic media.

Project plumbs economics of plastic

A project funded with EUR 3,090 presented sustainable environmental and economic urban development through education and the implementation of a practical programme for reducing and recycling solid waste.

On collecting sites, working groups of students and teachers were established at each high school to coordinate project implementation. A total of 20 students and two teachers were involved in each working group. In order to avoid confusion, the students were instructed to handle waste material and sort it into different plastic categories. For the purpose of maintaining Dendro-Park, continuous activities for the protection of its 230 endemic species were established to maintain the park.

Gazi Baba. To ensure the initiative’s sustainability, a coordination body composed of representatives from several institutions was established to maintain the educational programme. There has been a proposal that the Civil Environmental Forum may be involved in this educational programme. The project has been running for a long time and it seeks to become permanent. The inclusion of Dendro-Park into the map of attractions of Skopje will help sustain the project. As a result attraction, Dendro-Park could contribute in the community’s tourism.

This project could be replicated anywhere, inasmuch as the education of students on streets near green spaces and the parks makes a great contribution. A project that is not standardized could also be an asset, as it would be the CSO’s task to monitor the project's implementation.

Trees of knowledge

A project general EUR 1,109 aimed at encouraging different groups to take responsibility for acquiring their community’s (students, citizens, local self-governments, scientific and educational institutions) participation in a project. The project resulted in the creation of Dendro-Park, a green zone amounting to about 1,200 square metres on the grounds of the Faculty of Forestry and Faculty of Agriculture and Food of Skopje University.

To promote Dendro-Park, an educational programme was successfully held to explain the park’s significance to various audiences. The team devised a programme for the park’s promotion and inspired activities for its protection. It was necessary to involve all citizens of the three localities.

The members of the Association of Students of the Faculty of Forestry (Dendro) were trained on how to introduce their knowledge with high school and primary school students. More than 300 students organized an educational programme. Dendro-Park was promoted to the students of the Faculty of Forestry, thus creating an educational body.

For the purpose of maintaining Dendro-Park, continuous activities for the protection of 200/1000 trees twice per year must be carried out. With the goal of promoting such activities were signed representatives of the Gardeners of Forestry and Agriculture and Food of Skopje University.

In order to improve the park’s sustainability, a coordination body composed of representatives of the three localities was established. There has been a proposal that Dendro-Park be included in the Skopje Municipal Park on the grounds of the Faculty of Forestry.

An educational brochure was prepared on the roles and importance of a park within the urban arena to encourage citizens to get green spaces. One thousand copies were printed in Macedonian, Albanian and English.

The natural environment will continue to give the citizens a deeper importance of the park’s existence as a fundamental element of the urban environment. These have, some believe, resulted in the park’s current state and identities. The CSO is of the opinion that the park serves as a model for the adoption of sustainable development. The CSO is of the opinion that the park serves as a model for the adoption of sustainable development.

The park has been running for a long time and seeks to become permanent. The inclusion of Dendro-Park into the map of attractions of Skopje will help maintain the project. As a result attraction, Dendro-Park could contribute in the community’s tourism.
The REC

The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) is an international organisation with a mission to assist in solving environmental problems. Among other activities, the REC supports civil society organisations (CSOs) to be more effective in tackling the pressing problems they face. This REC-SECTOR (Supporting Environmental Civil Society Organisations in South-Eastern Europe) project aimed to strengthen the field of environmental protection. In promoting civil society, SECTOR helps to push grassroots groups to perform their roles as important drivers of community development in the region. In promoting civil society, SECTOR helps to push grassroots groups to perform their roles as important drivers of community development in the region.

The SECTOR project

April 2006 marked the launch of the framework programme SECTOR (Supporting Environmental Civil Society Organisations in South-Eastern Europe), which helps grassroots groups perform their role as important drivers of community development in the field of environmental protection. Its beneficiary area covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo (as defined by UNSCR 1244). The programme aimed to provide networking assistance and training to begin realising their organisational development plans.

National SECTOR grants

The national grants were distributed in three rounds and supported 199 projects in total. Announcements ran from 2006 to 2010, with a total of EUR 590,698 distributed. The major themes of the projects included waste management, energy conservation, sanitation, urban greening and urban transport. The major themes of the projects included waste management, energy conservation, sanitation, urban greening and urban transport.

Lessons learnt

It is crucial that local populations are willing to contribute to the improvement of urban environments. They participated in public hearings and debates and attended seminars on how to utilise the available funding and how to present project ideas in a manner that would attract funding. Projects involved recycling, composting and the setting up of “green zones” and giving practical education in the field.

Transport and energy conservation

Each of these two categories covered 17 percent of the total. Transport initiatives garnered EUR 33,500 in funding and energy conservation EUR 36,800. Work in both areas centred on how to use sustainable approaches to reduce air pollution and conserve natural resources. Classes were held, public debates organised and printed materials disseminated. Bicycle racks were installed and sustainable urban transport plans adopted. Energy conservation activities included demonstration projects on energy-efficient lighting and the use of solar collectors.

Waste management

Of the 188 students in strengthening capacities in environmental lobbying, working with policy makers and forming advocacy work and improving governance and industry. Two regional CSO networks received grants to implement selected components of their development plans. Each of these two categories covered 17 percent of the total. "Green zones" were made into tourist zones and another area was made into a national park where students can learn about subjects such as dendrology.

DISTRIBUTION OF NATIONAL GRANTS PROJECTS BY THEME

Foster Macedonia’s projects

Transport and its impacts 15%

Waste management 10%

Energy consumption 15%

Water and sanitation management 45%