

Themis: Managing Natural Resources and Combating Environmental Crime



The Themis Network is a country-driven regional cooperation initiative that focuses on managing natural resources and combating environmental crime in South Eastern Europe (SEE) (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) and the Republic of Moldova. Phase 1 of network activities ran from 2012 to 2014, and phase 2 will run until September 2017.

* 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.

The story so far

Given the considerable vulnerability of the SEE region to climate change, emissions of conventional pollutants and loss of biodiversity, comprehensive action is needed in terms of adaptation to environmental threats, including profit-seeking crimes, in order to build a better environment and a climate-resilient society and economy.

Since its launch, the Themis project has successfully created a community of like-minded state officials from SEE countries who are eager for change and who are now working together across borders to improve environmental governance through the rule of law and mutual understanding.

Ongoing goals

The Themis Network aims to strengthen regional cooperation in SEE via environmental law enforcement mechanisms that target the environment and justice sectors, in line with the EU accession process. Project activities also include Moldova, with the aim of transferring knowledge and experience from the SEE region and to strengthen Moldova's EU association process. The Themis Network contributes to the better implementation and enforcement of the EU environmental acquis and to significantly improving inter-institutional and inter-governmental cooperation (among the judiciary, prosecutor's office, police, ministries, universities, local governments, NGOs and regional/international networks), not only in the field of the environment, but also in other areas of governance. The impacts of cooperation will transcend the restricted field of environmental crimes and are expected to create added value in terms of good governance in the region.

2012

- Training needs assessment
- 4 regional trainings

2013

- 4 regional trainings
- 1 technical assistance workshop

2014

- Site visit to INTERPOL
- 6 national trainings

Stakeholders

Themis Network activities target officials from the national authorities responsible for environment, and in particular for forestry, nature protection and law enforcement; the judiciary, with involvement from decentralised administrative levels (regional/local); policy makers and operational staff from ministries of environment and related fields (justice, economy, forestry, rural development, spatial planning etc.); representatives of the administrations of natural parks and protected zones; enforcement agencies under the ministries of environment/forestry (environmental inspectors, permit writers, forest guards) and environmental protection agencies; judges and prosecutors; practitioners from enforcement agencies attached to the ministries of the interior (police, customs); and other related stakeholders (including civil society organisations and owners of significant natural resources).

Success story

During phase 1 (2012–2014), the following results were achieved:

- enhanced capacity in the SEE region via training on nature protection, forest management and combating environmental crime;
- new/reinforced links among national stakeholders;
- improved regional understanding and cross-border cooperation;
- strengthened international partnerships;
- exchanges of experience with EU countries (mainly Austria, Croatia and Hungary);
- 8 regional training events;
- 6 national training events;
- 1 technical assistance workshop;
- over 200 officials directly trained;
- approximately 800 officials indirectly benefiting from trainings; and
- 2 publications.

In the pipeline

Phase 2 activities (2014–2017) are expected to lead to:

- enhanced cooperation and dialogue among stakeholders responsible for environmental law implementation and enforcement;
- strengthened institutional capacities and knowledge transfer in beneficiary institutions with respect to natural resources management and combating environmental crimes; and
- better multi-agency networking within the countries through the exchange of experience and best practices.

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AUSTRIAN
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REC

2015

3 regional trainings

2016

Themis conference
3 sub-regional trainings

2017

7 national trainings