



CARDS

Country

Croatia

Implementation period

July 2003 - October 2004

Funding

€66,000 EU

Results

Equipped and set up an Environmental Advocacy Centre providing environmental information and education; increased support to local initiatives, improved capacity of local NGOs and increased public awareness of environmental issues

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Reinforcing Croatia's fledgling environmental movement

Supporting a network of environmental NGOs

The environmental movement in Croatia is under-developed. Since the war, the bulk of the resources injected into the country have gone into capacity building, mainly for human rights' NGOs, leaving very limited budgets for environmental organisations.


The aim of the one-year project 'Environmental Advocacy Centre for Croatia' with financial support from the CARDS programme is to strengthen environmental NGO advocacy capacity and the quality of public involvement in environment protection. This is to be achieved through the establishment of an Environmental Advocacy centre and attracting new members. Among the initiatives undertaken are setting up a public information centre, and organising eco-seminars and campaigns aimed at raising awareness of environmental issues at the local level, as well as at regional and national levels.

Much to do in so little time

Before the project concludes in October 2004, the team will have improved its capacity to influence law-making that affects the environment in Croatia, in line with the Aarhus International Convention and EU requirements.

To date, they have purchased equipment and consulted an architect to advise them on how to create an effective 'public space' for an information centre. In its first three months, the NGO organised six discussion panels on different topics, such as how to develop and protect green areas in Zagreb – the focal point of most of the activities, as it is Croatia's power centre – and how to put green issues onto the decision-making agenda.

The project also supported the organisation of numerous lectures and a very successful eco-seminar, in October 2003, which attracted over 100 participants, students and representatives of civil society. This was followed by a workshop



on how to design a green campaign, which was a precursor to an exhibition on the subject in 2004. On top of these activities, the organisation has supported – with money and advice – local authorities and carried out a media campaign to give the environment a louder voice in Croatian politics and society.

But the project faces many other challenges. Poor attendance by government officials at its events is a sign of government reluctance – or inability – to implement tighter environmental legislation, and a major hurdle for the NGO. At the moment there is little or no public consultation during the legislative process.

Early signs of success

Although still in its early stages, Croatia's green movement has notched up some successes during the year, notably in the Zagreb area. One example is the small, uninhabited island close to Vis, which risked becoming swamped with uncontrolled tourism. The community formed a local authority and organised a concert to raise awareness of the potential environmental problems on the island.

Future challenges

For organisations working in the environmental field finding new income-generating alternatives is a priority to allow them to continue their work.

Zelena Akcija's reputation is strong, having been active since 1990, and it is increasingly being called upon to give legal advice to local authorities. Yet funding is a perennial problem, as for many NGO's, and could become more difficult as Croatia's GDP climbs – in this event, international agencies may reduce their aid. Currently, 80% of funds are from international donors.