

**Fostering regional co-operation among
SEE Aarhus Centers:
“DRR exercise: a learning case”**

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Content

- Environmental and disaster risks in SEE;
- Milestones of regional cooperation among SEE Aarhus Centers;
- Strengthening regional cooperation in DRR;
- DRR concrete actions:
 - a. at regional level;
 - b. at local level;
- Impact of DRR activities;
- Lessons learnt.

Environmental and disaster risks in SEE

- In May 2014, severe floods hit entire regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina resulting in casualties, destruction of properties and infrastructures. Estimation (UN, EU, WB) calculated EUR 2.04 Billion of damage or 15% of GDP.
- In May 2014, severe floods affected also 24 municipalities in Serbia resulting in €1.7 billion of damages and losses.
- In 2015, in Albania a flash flooding which occurred in South of Albania caused a damage of over EUR 122 million in damages in the entire affected area.
- The region is constantly suffering not only from floods but of major forest fires and is a seismically active region in Europe.

Milestones of Cooperation of AIC-s in South East Europe

- **Tirana Document:** SEE Aarhus Centres met on 25-26 March 2015 regional roundtable to strengthen public participation in transboundary water management - exploring the synergies of the Espoo, Helsinki and Aarhus Conventions.
- **Joint Declaration:** On 3 June, 13 SEE Aarhus Centers signed a Joint Declaration to cooperate together for environmental issues and sustainable development.
- **Joint Project:** One month later, in July 2015, 13 Aarhus Centers of Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina met in Podgorica to develop further concrete steps for promoting good governance and transparency.



*Signing ceremony of SEE Aarhus centers in Vienna, 3 June 2015/
Annual Aarhus meeting.*

Strengthening regional cooperation in DRR

In the frame of the support provided by OCEEA, the Aarhus Centers have been part of two projects at local level:

1. Promote Community-Based DRR Awareness;
2. DRR and Security in the OSCE Area.

Supported by the Governments of Austria, Finland and Switzerland.



DRR concrete actions: At regional level

- A **regional Disaster Risk Reduction Training** (7-10 December 2015) held in Budva, Montenegro, brought together local authorities, civil emergencies and Aarhus Centres between ALB - MNE.
- A **study visit** held in Skadar/Shkodra Lake between local authorities, Aarhus centers proved the common challenge faced by both countries regarding floods and the importance of cross-border co-operation, hydropower water discharge early notification and communication.
- A **regional conference that** was held in Sarajevo, 25 September 2016 hosted by the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina gathered the representatives of partner municipalities, Aarhus Centres, national ministries responsible for disaster risk management and OSCE field operations to present findings, lessons between partner municipalities.
- Both events that took place in Budva and Sarajevo, the participants visited field locations to witness first-hand the impact of disasters as well as practice the understanding and evaluation of risk concepts.
- A **family guide on DRR** that was prepared by OSCE Mission in Serbia and Government of Serbia has been successfully replicated in Albania, 600 printed copies distributed in Shkodra and Vlora and is posted online at Ministry of Environment, Vlora and Shkodra websites.

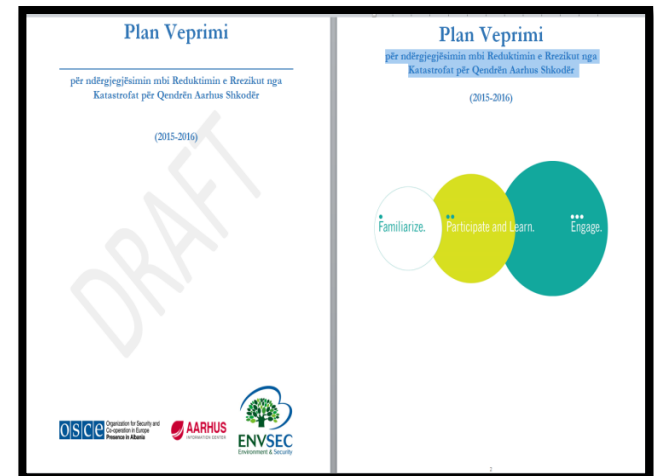
Promote community-based DRR awareness in cooperation with OCEEA and Aarhus Centre Shkodra

A two-day national workshop on DRR bringing together 40 participants from Lezha, Shkodra and Vlora authorities and Aarhus centers.

Preparation of a DRR communication Action Plan on community awareness for Shkodra municipality.

Target of awareness activities – schools and farmers:

- 12 schools, 319 students (age 8 -18);
- 201 females and 118 males;
- 30 Roma children;
- 8 administrative units, 166 farmers.



DRR and Security in the OSCE area in cooperation with OCEEA and Aarhus Vlora

A three-day bi-lateral workshop between Albania and Montenegro for local emergency authorities and Aarhus centres delivered on DRR approach and methodology.

Vlora - piloting municipality for DRR methodology:

- Technical guide for a safe use of butane gas tanks for families, kindergarten, public institutions;
- Guidelines for the defence of villages, farms and other rural assets against wildfires for rural communities;
- Guidelines for local public authorities how to react in wildfire situations;

A short (3 minutes) **TV documentary** to raise public awareness on wildfires and industrial accidents was produced;

A **briefing pack** with DRR related materials established and placed on the Municipal and Aarhus Centre websites.



The DRR exercise a learning case

At local level

- It was a **new experience** for AIC-s, for local government, schools and many stakeholders;
- Increasing the capacity building of local authorities to prevent and react during natural/ industrial disaster;
- Increasing the cooperation between different public institutions for acting properly and quickly during natural/ industrial disaster;
- Bringing together local stakeholders to discuss on improved responses and measures taken for local issues, like flood, fires, oil spill;
- It shows that preventing is sometimes impossible, but reacting wisely and in proper time can reduce risk and save lives;

At regional level

- Increases the role of **AICs network as an important factor** for regional cooperation for a very sensitive issue such as DRR.
- Enforces the idea that natural hazards and disasters need a regional approach and smart measures to address them properly.

Lessons learnt

At local level

- Aarhus Centres have an important role to play in community-based DRR and can be a natural partner for local government units;
- DRR awareness should be a constant process involving education curricula, community briefings and consultations;
- Local policy plans should be reviewed using a DRR methodology and climate change adaption measures.

At regional level

- Regional cooperation and information sharing are crucial to prevention and preparedness;
- Organize periodic roundtable/workshops with all AIC-s in SEE to share information, results achieved, experiences and strengthening cooperation;
- Make the AIC-s in SEE, an agent for change in regional cooperation.