

## Strengthening public participation in environmental matters in the Zupanja Karlovac (Croatia)



Public participation addressing the land-use plan of Zagreb. Photo: Zelena Akcija

### Background

In 2007, Croatia ratified the Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters (Aarhus Convention) and implemented it with the Environmental Protection Act. In the Regional Operational Programme of the Zupanija Karlovac, there is a commitment to public participation as well as a statement that one of the environmental protection priorities is the closure of the existing landfills and the establishment of recycling plants.

However, the rights of the public in environmental protection matters are not consequently applied yet. Authorities are not yet aware of the benefits of public participation and routines of public hearings and of integrating public expertise have not evolved yet. Environmental organisations report insufficient announcements of public participation processes, difficult access to information about projects which are being assessed by authorities and a selective participation of only the best known NGOs.

### Project

The project supported the establishment of cooperative relations between authorities and civil society actors. A training was organised which acquainted active environmentalist and representatives of environmental authorities with ways of effective public participation and which facilitated discussions about their mutual expectations as well as about current processes. Furthermore regional environmental organisations designed and implemented projects which fostered contact and dialogue with environmental authorities. Moreover, information and guidance materials on the subjects access to environmental information and public participation of citizens and associations were elaborated.

One of the project's results is a flyer for environmental authorities which informs about which public participation processes are required by law and how they can be organised.

- Target country/region: Croatia/Zupanja Karlovac
- Duration: 10/2009 – 02/2010
- Beneficiaries: Croatian local and regional non-governmental organisations, local and regional environmental authorities
- Implementing organisations: Independent Institute for Environmental Issues (UfU), [www.ufu.de](http://www.ufu.de), Zelena Akcija, [www.zelena-akcija.hr](http://www.zelena-akcija.hr)
- Project identification: FKZ 380 01 213