



## PROJECT INFORMATION

### Better Access to Justice in Western Balkan Countries

Updated: October 2019



Access to justice in Balkan countries - although the road is hard the result matters

Source: K. Tingas

#### Background

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia are parties to the Aarhus Convention, while Kosovo is interested in adopting its principles. Parts of these countries' administrative and judicial procedures do not comply with the Convention's standards yet. The judicial reform process is ongoing and the court system is changing, but citizens and NGOs still experience significant barriers when exercising their right of access to justice. Only few cases on environmental matters are brought to court, resulting in limited relevant judgements.

#### Project details

The project's objective was to facilitate the reduction of impediments for access to justice in the Parties to the Aarhus Convention in the SEE region. This was to be accomplished by increasing the knowledge and awareness of judges, legal professionals and NGOs on access to justice in environmental matters. Moreover, the project aimed at enabling NGOs to gain and use skills to enforce their rights. The project led to enhanced capacities of judiciary and legal professionals, facilitated cooperation among the stakeholders, and increased the awareness and knowledge of NGOs. Thus, the project provisioned the further support for an implementation of the Aarhus Convention. The key project activities comprised the development of guidance material and the organisation of a series of trainings for civil society, judges and legal professionals, the collection of local case studies on access to justice, and the development of a comparative analytical study on access to justice in SEE countries. The project was implemented in cooperation with the ministries of justice, judicial training centers, schools for magistrates, Aarhus Focal Points, Ombudsman offices, key legal professionals, public advocacy groups and NGOs in the countries.

**Target country/region:** South and Eastern Europe

**Duration:** 09/2016 – 08/2018

**Beneficiaries:** Judiciary and legal professionals, local NGOs

**Implementing organisation:** Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)

**Project number:** 76293

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#### Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP)

for environmental protection in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and other countries neighbouring the European Union – a programme of the Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety

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