

Hotspots Fastfacts



MATTERS OF FACT

Preliminary site investigations to prioritize environmental hot spots in Albania have been conducted by an Austrian – Dutch Consortium, IC Consulanten & Witteveen+Bos. A short list of **10** priority sites has been identified. The scoring methodology used is consistent with best international practices that support a consistent and balanced quantitative assessment of the environmental risks/impacts of different hot spot zones.

A need assessment report of the capacity building needs of national and local stakeholders has been produced to provide guidelines for a strategy for capacity building at the national, local level and within the private sector for the safe management of hazardous chemicals/waste, contaminated sites covering.

A marketing survey of professional environmental services has been conducted and based on its results, training needs have been identified and a roster of qualified environmental experts has been established.

A preliminary site investigation for Bajza hotspot has been conducted by the German company Montec.



Photo: Hazardous chemicals stored in Bajza Railway Station.

UNDP environmental hotspots programme in Albania

The United Nations Development Programme and the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration are conducting two projects to tackle environmental hotspots in Albania, made possible with the financing of the Government of the Netherlands. Through the projects, the Albanian Government and UNDP aim to achieve environmentally sustainable development (MDG-7) in Albania through integrating the principles of sustainable development into national and local policies and programmes, while observing the commitments of the Albanian Government within the EU accession process.

Several studies on environmental hotspots, conducted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have concluded that immediate action is required in order to protect human health and the environment. The National Environmental Action Plan for Albania (2002) reported that there are an estimated 3,100 tons of chemicals in the public economic sector and 1,000 tons of pesticides in the agricultural sector. Many are obsolete stocks and represent

different levels of risk to human health and the environment that need to be effectively managed.

Strengthening capacities in the Western Balkans countries to address environmental problems through remediation of high priority hot spots is a regional project that covers nine hotspots in the Western Balkans. The area to be rehabilitated in Albania is the Bajza railway station near Shkodra Lake where expired pesticides and industrial chemicals have been stored. While the main focus will be the physical works needed to mitigate the ecological problems, institution strengthening and capacity building are also integral components of the programme.

Identification and prioritization of environmental hotspots in Albania identifies and assesses environmental hotspots in Albania. A database is being created, and the capacities of the environmental administration are being strengthened to further identify and monitor hotspots and plan remedial actions. The rehabilitation process is supported by comprehensive and targeted media coverage and the building of central and local capacities through intensive training



Photo: Representatives of Bajza Commune.

courses and seminars. The projects aims, to support the Albanian Government to achieve its midterm objective related to the rehabilitation of polluted areas within basic safety standards by eliminating toxic materials, as well as to establish a comprehensive inventory of all environmental hot spots in Albania.

Local community engagement

A seminar with the community of Bajza was conducted to share information about the hotspot regeneration project. Bajza is a small town (Kastriati Commune) situated in the northern part of Albania, about 15 km from Shkodra city. During the early 1990s 480 tons of hazardous chemicals were imported and temporarily stored in Bajza. The most notable of these chemicals are toxaphene and phenyl mercury acetate, both of which have been banned in the EC since 1983.

The seminar provided a platform for residents to voice their concerns about the presence of hazardous chemicals in their community. As part of the event an environmental survey concerning the hazardous effects of environmental degradation on health was prepared and completed by 86 local residents.

The survey found that 53.5 percent of participants had reported symptoms related to hazardous chemicals. 33.7 percent of participants commented that that local medical doctor had linked health complaints directly to exposure to hazardous

chemicals. This included allergies, headaches, respiratory problems and cancer. The results will be sent to the Institute of Public Health for further analysis. They will be used also to develop a public awareness campaign suited to the needs of the community.

The participants agreed that the rehabilitation of environmental hotspot in Bajza was important to attract new investment and improve the quality of life of the local inhabitants through creating possibilities for further development.

Environmental advocacy

Think Green to Have a Future was the theme of an painting/photographic exhibition organized between the UNDP hotspots projects and students of the Fine Arts Department at the National Academy of Arts. The event was organized to raise awareness of fostering public awareness of environmental protection and regeneration in Albania.

Millennium Development Goal 7

Goal 7 the Millennium Development Goals sets out to: *Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources.*

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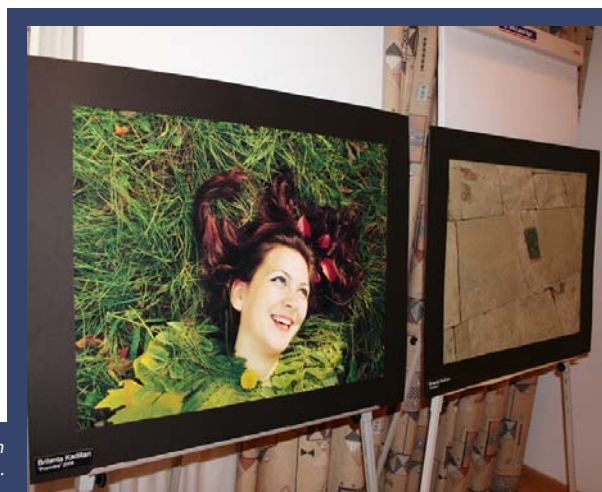


Photo: Artwork from the painting/photographic organized in Tirana to raise awareness of environmental issues.

A roundtable discussions with media representatives have been organized in Shkodra and Tirana from May to July, as part of efforts to raise awareness of environmental hotspots. Members of the press were briefed about all UNDP environmental programmes. The main purpose of the roundtable was to build the capacity of journalists to cover environmental issues in a coherent manner.

A seminar with representatives of local and central governments was organized in order to enhance their capacities to implement sound environmental policies. A questionnaire was distributed to the participants. Based on the survey results participants revealed an interest in learning more about the issue, specifically in the up to date management of hotspots zones.