

Foreword

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SPATIAL PLANNING OF THE RS NOW IN CHARGE OF AREA OF ENERGY

The amended Act on the Organisation and Sphere of Activity of the Ministries provides that the areas of energy and mining now fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. In my opinion, the objections that a conflict of interest means that energy and the environment cannot be dealt with within one ministry are not justified (similar objections, which have not been confirmed in practice, were also raised when the areas of the environment and spatial planning had been joined). On the contrary we expect that the interests of environmental protection and of energy as an economic activity will be better and more easily coordinated in the framework of one sector. To corroborate this hypothesis let me mention the case of Denmark, which without doubt successfully masters the management of both policies within one ministry.

In the area of energy, two important aspects of environmental protection are accounted for: the increased role of renewable energy sources and subsequently, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The relevant targets and measures concerning these issues have already been defined in the National Environmental Action Programme . In this context the adoption of a programme on the use of biomass as an energy source that the Government will discuss this month, will also be important. In order to implement the measures for the efficient use of energy, the energy renovation projects for public buildings, a greater use of renewable sources and a change of mentality in regard to the choice of transport, as well as other activities aimed at a reduction of air pollution, we will have to plan an increase in public spending, guarantee an adequate price for energy (with environmental protection costs included), provide more attractive loans for energy efficient investments etc. In the area of energy we are also going to have to deal with the harmonisation of the sectoral legislation with the EU *acquis*. In order to achieve that, two crucial legal acts in this area, the Energy Act and the Mining Act have already been adopted. In addition, we intend to concentrate on the preparation of the EU accession strategy, a gradual liberalisation of the energy market, the abolition of monopolies, and the creation of conditions for private investments into the energy sector.

Janez Kopač, MA,

Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning

Feature

ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NGOS

On April 25 a meeting was held between representatives of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning and members of environmental non-governmental organisations. The Ministry co-organised the meeting with the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC). 53 participants attended the forum. The purpose of the meeting was to confirm the programme of cooperation between the Ministry and the NGOs entitled

Partnership for the Environment which had been drafted jointly in the last few months, and to reach an agreement on 2001 priority tasks.

The programme was determined on the basis of previously adopted documents, of consultations with NGO members, and the long-term practical experience with such cooperation. It has been designed as a fundamental partnership agreement and not as a barrier to the development of other forms of cooperation. It consists of three parts: adequate conditions for the functioning of NGOs, access to information, and public participation in the decision-making processes regarding activities, plans, programmes and policies in the area of the environment, as well as in the preparation of laws and other legal documents.

The meeting started with an introductory presentation of the state of the environmental non-governmental sector (geographic dispersion, level of activities, legal forms, share of activities in the area of the environment, financial situation and funding) by Milena Marega from the REC. After that the non-governmental organisations presented their views regarding the cooperation priorities between the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning and the NGOs:

1. adequate conditions for functioning of environmental NGOs (the status of training opportunities for NGOs);
2. funding (a long-term funding system)
3. access to information (legally and technically facilitated access, promotional activities to advise various public target groups about the possibilities of access to environmental information etc.);
4. public participation in decision-making processes (the formalisation of procedures for the participation of NGO representatives in various working bodies and delegations, the legal basis for public participation in decision-making processes, technical and financial assistance, the appointment of a special body for complaints);
5. the appointment of a working group for the preparation of the 2002 action plan and the follow-up of the implementation activities as planned by the *Partnership for the Environment* programme.

The Minister Janez Kopač, MA, presented the programme priorities in the area of the environment and nature in the current year, and the organisational changes within the Ministry. State Secretary Radovan Tavzes, MA, explained the position of the Ministry regarding priority partnership directives on those issues that had earlier been identified by the representatives of the NGOs. The working group will study all the proposals and coordinate them with the above-mentioned areas of activities. Some of the proposals will be used as a basis for the preparation of a public tender entitled *The Promotion of Environmental Protection*.

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ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES AT THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SPATIAL PLANNING

On April 27 the new Act on Changes and Amendments to the Act on the Organisation and Sphere of Activity of the Ministries (Ur. l. RS, No 30/01) came in force. The law provides that besides the areas of energy and mining, which came under its jurisdiction, the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning will from now on also consist of the following bodies: the

Agency of the RS for the Environment, the Mining Authority of the RS, the Office of the RS for Spatial Planning, the Mapping and Surveying Authority of the RS, the Nuclear Safety Authority of the RS, the Agency for Efficient Use of Energy, and the Inspectorate of the RS for the Environment and Spatial Planning.

Regarding the areas of energy and mining the activities of the ministry now also include primary and transformed energy, the production of energy resources and their rational use, management strategies for all types of raw minerals (regardless of whether they are energy sources, metals or non-metals), the opening and functioning of mines, except for those that are in the process of closing or have stopped functioning according to relevant legal provisions. In the area of energy the most important tasks ahead of the Ministry are the harmonisation of the sectoral legislation with the EU *acquis* and to this end two principal legal acts in this area have been adopted, the Energy Act and the Mining Act. The EU accession strategy for energy will also have to be prepared, as well as the liberalisation of the energy market, the abolition of monopolies and the creation of possibilities for private investments into the energy sector.

The new Agency of the RS for the Environment and Spatial Planning is a body which is part of the Ministry and also is the main national expert institution which is responsible for implementation of the administrative and expert tasks related to the integrated protection of the environment and natural assets. These include the conservation of nature, the protection of air and soil, environmental impact assessment, protection from noise, water management, the distribution of concessions for use of waters, the monitoring of meteorological, hydrological and ecological parameters, assessment of the state of geological, seismological and other geophysical phenomena etc. Three existing bodies in the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning were integrated into the agency, which Slovenia was bound to establish in accordance with its EU accession negotiation position: the Nature Protection Authority of the RS, the Hydro-meteorological Institute of the RS and the Authority of the RS for Geophysics. They were reorganised into new units: the Environmental Office, the Office for General Affairs, the Monitoring Office, the Seismological Office and the Meteorological Office. The Agency was established in order to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation (including the delivery of information), through rationalisation of administrative procedures.

At the May 4 Government meeting Andreja Čerček Hočevar was appointed the acting manager of the Agency.

From now on the Mining Authority of the RS and the Agency for the Efficient Use of Energy will also be incorporated into the Ministry. The Inspectorate of the RS for the Environment and Spatial Planning will take over the monitoring of the search for and the exploitation of all types of raw minerals, electrical energy, thermal energy and the rational use of energy. Until now two independent inspectorates have been in charge of these areas, the Energy Inspectorate of the RS and the Mining Inspectorate of the RS. At the May 4 Government meeting the previous manager of the Nature Protection Authority of the RS Albin Krapež was appointed the Head National Inspector for the Environment and Spatial Planning (his appointment came in force on May 15). His deputies will be: Srečko Valič for the area of spatial planning, Ivan Štefelj for the area of the environment and Bojana Pohar for legal affairs.

The previous manager of the Agency of the RS for Efficient Use of Energy at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Franc Beraus, was appointed by the Government as manager of this Agency within the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning.

At its May 10 meeting the Government also appointed the State Secretary for Energy, Robert Golob, PhD.

By the end of May, the confirmation of the above-mentioned positions will be coordinated with the amendments provided by law.

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MINISTER KOPAČ WROTE TO COMMISSIONER WALLSTRÖM

In mid-April the Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Janez Kopač, MA, send a letter to the EU Commissioner for the Environment and Nuclear Safety Margot Wallström in which he expressed his astonishment that certain countries in the world did not acknowledge the importance of the Kyoto Protocol. Its implementation is crucial for the start of a planned reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and thus the tempering of climate change, states Kopač. It is one of the highest environmental priorities for the EU as well as for Slovenia.

Slovenia actively lobbies for the adoption of the mechanisms for implementation of the Kyoto Protocol that could become a foundation for its ratification by several countries which are listed in Annex I. Our country has already adopted its strategy for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, which will have an impact on certain decisions regarding national economic development in the years to come. The strategy will enable a gradual reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the areas of energy, transport, industry, agriculture and forestry, the treatment of waste etc. The emphasis is not only on the need to limit emissions, but above all on the introduction of new, more energy-efficient technologies which are going to increase the competitiveness of our companies and bring more economical, environment-friendly behaviour patterns into all areas of human activities, whilst not lowering the standard i.e. the quality of life. "We are aware that by the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol we are going to contribute to the global solution of the climate change issue on one hand and on the other hand, to an accelerated and more sustainable economic development of Slovenia", concludes Kopač in his letter.

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9TH MEETING OF THE UN COMMISSION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

On April 17-21 the Government of the RS sent a delegation composed of the Minister Janez Kopač, MA, and Emil Ferjančič, MA, to the 9th regular meeting of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (UNCSD) held in New York. The Mission of the RS to the United Nations also actively participated in the meeting.

Annual UNCSD meetings always revolve around a specific topic and this year the Commission discussed the sustainable development of the sectors of energy and transport, the issue of public and private investments into these sectors, and analysed to what extent sustainable development is taken into consideration in politics. Most of the attention was devoted to the issues of energy. In his speech at the plenary session, Minister Kopač elaborated on this topic and presented the experiences and positions of Slovenia. He stated our efforts to extend the use of renewable sources of energy and the readiness of Slovenia to ratify and implement its obligations with regard to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions determined by the Kyoto Protocol, which Slovenia had signed.

As expected, the UNCSD meeting was held as part of the preparations for the 2002 world summit in Johannesburg on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the UN Conference on the Environment and Development. As yet, a number of fundamental issues related to the

purpose and the goals of the planned meeting of leaders of states and governments remain unresolved even after intensive ministerial consultations.

At these consultations, the Slovenian delegation did not agree to additional financial or legal obligations, though it confirmed the readiness of Slovenia to implement the adopted international treaties.

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THE SLOVENIAN-CROATIAN MINISTERIAL MEETING

On April 13 the Minister Janez Kopač, MA, and the Croatian Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning Božo Kovačević met in Podsreda Castle in the Kozjansko Park. The ministers discussed bilateral cooperation in areas of the environment and spatial planning. Both countries confront similar environmental protection and spatial issues, among which the joint management, maintenance and renovation of border water streams, the protection from floods and the use of water resources, the coordination of spatial planning documents of both countries, the nature protection areas in the border territories, the protection of the Adriatic Sea and the coastal areas, the development of the European transport system etc. The purpose of the meeting was to accelerate development and to improve bilateral and cross-border cooperation in the above-mentioned areas of activities. The ministers also agreed that Slovenia would transfer to Croatia its experiences in the EU accession process and in the creation of regional parks. Both countries will coordinate their efforts with the purpose of applying jointly for certain forms of EU funding.

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Programs/Projects

2001 OPENING OF THE SLOVENIAN AGRI-ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Agriculture represents 40% of land use in the EU countries and 32% in Slovenia (data source: Corina). Agriculture therefore has a substantial impact on the environment, particularly on the quality of natural resources and on biological diversity. Since the late 1950s the European Community has supported the intensive production of food with direct payments per unit of product (per hectare of agricultural product, per head of livestock etc.). In thirty years of implementation of the common agricultural policy, agriculture has been intensified, new agricultural land cultivated and sufficient food production ensured, yet the "side effects" were a catastrophe: the number of people living off agriculture dropped, particularly in remote areas; there have been regular surpluses of food products that needed to be destroyed in order to prevent additional competition on the market; the increase in use and then run-off of phosphates and nitrates resulted in eutrophication and pollution of many surface waters, and drinking water resources were also harmed; the increased use of pesticides and the extension of agriculture onto virgin land resulted in the loss of vulnerable types of habitats and in a decrease in biodiversity. In a large part of Europe extensively managed wet and dry meadows have become rare and subsequently, many species of flora and fauna have become endangered. Even the populations of certain species of birds that figure at the top of the food chain and react only to substantial environmental changes, have been decimated. Already since 1979 the Bird Directive has bound the EU member states to conserve the habitats of endangered species of birds and yet, as a consequence of the dominant agricultural policy, the number of white storks has been halved. In certain regions

of Europe even previously common species such as the lark and the sparrow have disappeared.

At the beginning of the 1990s the EU reacted by introducing the Agri-Environment Programme; a strong additional motive was also the pressure coming from the non-European states and the World Trade Organisation for the suppression of direct payments per unit of produced food product. The Programme supports and promotes those uses of agricultural land which ensure the protection and improvement of the state of the environment and a sustainable use of natural resources. It strives to preserve biological diversity, as well as to protect environmentally valuable and endangered agricultural landscape (Article 22 of the Regulation 1257/99). The European Commission also emphasises the importance of the implementation of agri-environment measures in the Natura 2000 areas. In these areas the member states are bound to conserve the habitats not only by the Bird Directive but also by the 1992 Habitats Directive.

The Agri-Environment Programme (AEP) includes a variety of measures which each country determines independently, but they must all contribute to the realisation of the goals of the Common Environmental and Agricultural Policy. Direct payments are intended to cover the additional investments and the difference in income as a result of the conservation of specific agricultural use of land. The payments, calculated in such a way, ensure that farmers who opt for the implementation of the agri-environment measures receive an income on a par with the farmers who continue to produce food intensively; this is of particular importance since farmers decide to implement agri-environment measures on a voluntary basis. In the EU member states the share of implementation of agri-environment measures varies greatly: from Austria and Scandinavia where over 70% of farmers implement the AEP to the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain where this share is under 7% (data source: Directorate General of Agriculture, 1997). Still, in every region several years had passed before people realised the importance of this programme.

The Slovenian position on the 2001-2006 AEP is rather specific. The average Slovenian farm is very small according to European standards, but we still have several areas where agricultural production is extensive. In these areas the traditional cultural landscape is generally also the most preserved and this is where we still find the most endangered species of flora and fauna. The Slovenian AEP, created by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food with the cooperation of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning and numerous other bodies, has as its main goal to "maintain those farming practices and promote methods of food production that would ensure a sustainable use of natural resources, conserve the biological diversity of plant and animal species and protect the natural and cultural landscape without restricting the sustainable development of rural areas". The programme consists of 20 measures of which 10 are already being implemented on the basis of a 2001 Government regulation. Half of the measures have previously been implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food within other programmes, for example in ecological farming projects, the integrated production of fruit, grapes and greens, the prevention of erosion of vineyards, and mountain pasturing. This year financial support is also available for the conservation of meadow fruit gardens and the conservation of meadows by the sustainable breeding of livestock. In nature protection areas farmers will have the right to additional support for every implemented agri-environment measure.

It is of importance that the implementation of the programme has started this year, though in the years to come the measures will have to be completed, improved and evaluated on the basis of this year's experiences and with a greater consideration for environmental protection requirements and biological diversity.

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Calendar

May 22: Biodiversity Day

May 23 and 24 Ljubljana: the Jožef Stefan Institute and the Nova Gorica Polytechnic invite you to a seminar on the Conservation of Water Quality in a Period of Fast Economic Growth

May 25 Ljubljana, the Jožef Stefan Institute: seminar on support to the decision-making processes in the area of environmental protection

Centre for the Transfer of Knowledge in the Area of Information Technologies, the Jožef Stefan Institute, Jamova 39, Ljubljana, Phone: +386 1 01 477 3593, Fax: +386 1 01 423 2049, e-mail: ct3@ijs.si

May 23-25 Split: ministerial meeting on the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative

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May 29 – June 1 Portorož: 6th EIONET workshop on the evaluation of air quality and the 2nd meeting of the working group for measurements and modelling EMEP TFMM

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June 5 World Environment Day

June 22 Ljubljana: Great Hall of ZAG, Dimičeva 12: technical meeting entitled Energy Basics: Methodological Approach, Organisation and Practical Experiences

Andrej Klemenc, Slovenian E-forum, Dimičeva 12, Ljubljana, tel./Fax: +386 1 280 4473

June 27-30 Ljubljana: Decision Support System NET expert meeting. Transfer of the Rodos system to Slovenia (Rodos is a support system for real time decision-making in case of a nuclear accident).

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End of June: visit of the Head of the European Environment Agency Domingo Jiménez-Beltrána

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