

Lokal Agenda 21 in Croatia

Challenges for Sustainable development in Local Communities



REGIONALNI CENTAR ZAŠTITE OKOLIŠA
za Srednju i Istočnu Europu
Ured u Hrvatskoj

This publication is financed by Department of Food and Rural Affairs, UK (DEFRA), through Environment for Europe Fund, within the project "Our Community, Our Future: Promoting Sustainable Development in Local Communities in Croatia"



Authors: Željka Medven, Helena Hećimović

Translation and editing: Anda Bukvić, Irena Brnada

Publisher:

Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe
Country office Croatia, Đorđićeva 8a, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia
Tel: +385 (0)1 4810-774, 4873-622; Tel./Fax: +385 (0)1 4810 844
E-mail: rec@rec-croatia.hr; URL: www.rec-croatia.hr

Design and layout: Igor Jeremić

Printed by: Kratis

Circulation: 800

ISBN: 953-7418-00-6

The entire contents of this publication are copyright

© Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe 2006

No part of this publication may be sold in any form or reproduced for sale without prior written permission of the copyright holder.

neznani i u eng verziji išao CIP?

CIP - Katalogizacija u publikaciji

Nacionalna i sveučilišna knjižnica - Zagreb

UDK 504.03:330.341>(497.5)

330.341:504.03>(497.5)

MEDVEN, Željka

Lokalna Agenda 21 u Hrvatskoj : izazovi održivog razvoja u lokalnim zajednicama = Local Agenda 21 in Croatia : challenges for sustainable development in local communities / Željka Medven, Helena Hećimović ; <prijevod Anda Bukvić, Irena Brnada>. - Zagreb : Regionalni centar zaštite okoliša za Srednju i Istočnu Europu, Ured u Hrvatskoj, 2006.

Tekst usporedo na hrv. i engl. jeziku.

ISBN 953-7418-00-6

1. Hećimović, Helena

I. Održivi razvoj -- Koprivnica --

Strategija razvoja II. Zaštita okoliša --

Europa -- Međunarodne konvencije III.

Održivi razvoj -- Lokalna samouprava --

Međunarodne konvencije

Contents

Sustainable Development in Local Communities

Introduction

Sustainable development

Agenda 21

Aalborg Charter

About the project

The Town of Koprivnica

How we got to Local Agenda 21?

Local Agenda 21 in Koprivnica – initial steps

Present and future of our city – what is appreciated, what is aspired?

Development of Local Agenda 21 - LA21KC

What are our weak points?

Plans for the future

Introduction

Increased concern over global consequences of pollution, misuse of natural resources and poverty inspire us to think about how to solve these problems. Ongoing developmental directions of the world jeopardize basic systems we all depend on. Let us look at some of the human activities and their impact on the environment.

Climate change

Fossil fuels combustion (coal, oil, natural gas) results in emissions of carbon dioxide, CO₂, into the air, in quantities too large for plants and oceans, the largest natural absorbers of CO₂, to process. This results in greenhouse effect, which means that the carbon dioxide layer surrounding the Earth is getting thicker, thereby causing global warming and climate

There are scientifically verified data describing impact of human activities on climate changes. As a consequence of climate change in the 20th century, the temperature increased by 0.6°C, whereas the sea level rose by 10-20 cm. In the 21st century, the temperature is expected to increase by 6°C, and the sea level to rise by 88 cm.



Result in more frequent flooding episodes (photo: Radojka Kuhar)

change. Apart from that, as a result of billions of tons of CO₂ released into the atmosphere, acid rains occur, and the sea, normally mildly alkaline, is becoming increasingly acid. Apart from industry, the most dangerous polluters releasing greenhouse gases are transport and energy sectors. Due to global warming, ecological disasters occur every day: melting of icebergs, increased sea level, floods, fire, human victims, loss of plant and animal habitats.

Production of artificial fertilizers and pesticides has increased around ten times within the last 50 years.

Agriculture

Today's industrial agriculture relies heavily on oil (fuel, artificial fertilizers, protective substances), and oil is disappearing. Monocultural agriculture is becoming less and less productive since it is more

susceptible to pests, it impoverishes the soil, facilitates erosion and demands a lot of water, which again results in salt intrusion, especially in coastal areas, and decreased water availability. What is more, huge percentage of arable land is lost to new settlements and infrastructure every year, and food travels thousands of kilometres, from one continent to another, before it reaches our table.

In order to produce a ton of wheat, one needs 1000 ton of water, and wheat uses up only 45% of that water.

To produce, package and deliver bread to the consumers one uses 2.5 more energy than bread itself has.



Organic farming requires educated food producers (photo: Kruno Kartus)



Waste at illegal landfills endangers environment and human health (photo: REC archive)

Waste

Huge quantities of waste are a clear sign of increased consumption at the global level and a proof that our attitude towards global environment has reached a critical stage. Our wasteful consumer society is clearly based on wrong assumptions: we do not have infinite resources at our disposal, which will enable us everlasting production, nor do we have legal or illegal landfills which will take care of endless mountains of garbage. We are gradually adopting the NIMBY attitude (Not-in-My-Backyard): waste is everything which has lost its primary purpose, is outdated, or in such a condition that it is more expensive to repair it than to throw it away.

According to the UN data, 15% of the world population is responsible for 56% of global consumption. If we all lived like those 15% of the population, we would need more than 2.5 planets to meet consumer needs. If we looked at the whole process, starting from extraction of raw materials and their processing into primary materials, all the way to distribution and packaging of materials and product, each cell phone would be responsible for production of around 75 kg of waste. In 2005, one third of our planet or around 2 billion people owned a mobile phone, which is 150 billion tons of 'hidden waste', or 50 times larger quantity of waste than is currently produced in Europe or in some parts of Central Asia.

Water

Water is essential for living and one of the main resources of the 21st century. That is due to the increased number of people on Earth, but also because the need for water has increased as a consequence of growing standard of living, changing living habits and budding industrial and agricultural production.

Less than 3% of the total water supplies in the world is drinking (fresh) water. Polar ice and inaccessible underground waters make up more than 50% of this small quantity. Around one third of the world population lives in the countries with moderate to considerable lack of drinking water. If the current trend of water consumption continued, this percentage would account for two thirds of the world population by the year 2025.

Agricultural production pollutes surface and underground waters to a large extent: nitrates and large quantities of pesticides are released into the water. Water polluted from various industrial processes is released into sewage system, natural watercourses, lakes and seas, often without any previous treatment.

We exploit natural resources faster than the Earth can renew them and generate waste quicker than the Earth can decompose it. We impoverish the Earth's assets by spending far more than we earn. Our current way of living, especially in the Western world, is UNSUSTAINABLE!



Fresh water habitats like wetlands protect biodiversity of plants and animals (photo: Radojka Kuhar)

Sustainable development

One of the standard ways to define sustainable development is to describe it as:

'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'

(World Commission on Environment and Development, document 'Our Common Future', also known as the Brundtland Report)

We should be therefore guided by the principle that our present will unavoidably in the future become history of the future generations, and that decisions about their options in that future are made today.

This means that we should, starting from today, find ways to improve quality of living for all, and at the same time live according to the carrying capacity of the Earth. Carrying capacity, or physical resistance of the environment, means that there are limits to exploiting the Earth's resources (fossil fuels, water, rare metals etc.), as well as to its capacity to decompose products of human activities (such as municipal waste, wastewater, waste gases). Sustainable development is to promote the idea that standards of living should be rooted in the existing capacities of nature, not in continuous exploitation of the environment. Furthermore, sustainable economies and sustainability of the environment should go hand in hand: continuous economic growth is unsustainable and it is not the only standard by which a healthy environment is to be measured. Social justice, equality and cultural support also constitute sustainability. Sustainable development requires utilization of human talents and resources in a way which supports life and strength of local communities. Sustainable development involves prudent management of natural, economic and human resources.

If taken seriously, sustainable development should result in demands for dramatic changes in nearly all walks of life. It is not only that our consumer habits need to change, which is already hard enough in itself: our perception of economy, politics and society needs to change as well.

Sustainable development challenges each and every individual to be responsible enough to recognize what could be done, and is conceived in the moment in which the individual realizes that his or her interests are inextricably intertwined with interests of community.



Illustration 1: Key components of sustainable development

Agenda 21

After the UN Conference on Environment and Development which took place in Rio de Janeiro in summer 1992, the term 'sustainable development' became the leading concept of environmental protection.

At that time, the representatives of 179 governments agreed that it was impossible to have a healthy global society and economy with so much poverty and environmental degradation. In order to support the road to the future through sustainable development, they initiated a process named Agenda 21 - Action plan for the 21st century.

Agenda 21 is a model of action in 40 different areas (protection of soil, forests, waters, air, sustainable agriculture and rural development, conservation of biological diversity, waste management etc.) and it targets 9 major social groups: women, children and youth, indigenous people, non-governmental organizations, local government, workers and their trade unions, business and industry, scientists and farmers, whose activities are of critical importance for sustainable development of the Earth.

Together with Agenda 21, there was an invitation sent to local authorities (cities and municipalities) to promote discussion about sustainable development within their communities and persuade them to develop individual action plans.

Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 describes the role of local authorities:

"...Because so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives.

Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing national and subnational environmental policies. As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development.

"...Each local authority should enter into a dialogue with its citizens, local organizations and private enterprises and adopt "a local Agenda 21". Through consultation and consensus-building, local authorities would learn from citizens and from local, civic, community, business and industrial organizations and acquire the information needed for formulating the best strategies. The process of consultation would increase household awareness of sustainable development issues..."

Why was the invitation sent to local authorities?

Let us think about foundations for living. Water. Transport. Energy. Waste management. Public health. Soil. Food. Air. Physical planning. At some point, after all the international agreements, domestic legislation and programmes, management of many of these primary resources and services becomes a responsibility of the local authorities.

The guiding principle is this: first and foremost, sustainable development should happen there where people live, buy things, go to school, plan construction sites, where they work: meaning, in towns and municipalities, in local communities. This is how the idea of Local Agenda 21 was conceived.

Aalborg commitments

We are committed to...

1. Governance ...energizing our decision-making process through increased participatory democracy.

2. Local management towards sustainability ...implementing effective management cycles, from formulation, through implementation to evaluation.

3. Natural common goods ...fully assuming our responsibility to protect, to preserve and to ensure equitable access to natural common goods.

4. Responsible consumption and lifestyle choices ...adopting and facilitating the prudent and efficient use of resources and encouraging sustainable consumption and production.

5. Planning and design ...a strategic role for urban planning and design in addressing environmental, social, economic, health and cultural issues for the benefit of all.

6. Better mobility, less traffic We recognize the interdependence of transport, health and environment and are committed to strongly promoting sustainable mobility choices.

7. Local action for health ...protecting and promoting the health and wellbeing of our citizens.

8. Vibrant and sustainable local economy ...creating and ensuring a vibrant local economy that gives access to employment without damaging the environment.

9. Social equity and justice ...securing inclusive and supportive communities.

10. Local to global ...assuming our global responsibility for peace, justice, equity, sustainable development and climate protection.

Aalborg Charter

Agenda 21 achieved success which many other documents and initiatives aspire. Instead of being put away to the archives, this Agenda was distributed to different organizations: many people have grasped its significance and started to act accordingly.

Local authorities around the world accept the challenge of Agenda 21, thereby acknowledging they still have a lot to learn. In the year 1992, thousands of local authorities in dozens of countries all over the world started their own campaigns for promotion and drafting LA21.

Main local authorities all around Europe, including the Council for European Municipalities and Regions, Eurocities, Healthy Cities, International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), have come together and launched the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign.

The Charter of European Cities and Towns Towards Sustainability was adopted by the participants of the First European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns, which took place on 27th May 1994 in Aalborg, Denmark. From that date, all the municipalities, cities and regions which opt for sustainable development are to sign the Aalborg Charter, thereby showing their willingness to consistently follow the path given.

The European forerunners of developing LA21 are the Nordic countries, Great Britain, Ireland, Spain and Italy.

One thousand participants of the fourth European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns, (Aalborg +10) on 11th June 2004 recognized the Aalborg commitments as conference declaration, while the representatives of 110 local authorities signed the document at their concluding plenary session.

About the project

The main objective of the project '**Our community, our future: promoting sustainable development of local communities in Croatia**', implemented by the REC Country Office in Croatia, was to promote processes towards sustainable development for the 21st century, especially through comprehending and developing Local Agenda 21.

Within the framework of this project, REC Croatia was partner and advisor to the local authorities, endorsing the process through educational seminars and workshops and introducing methodologies and practical examples of LA21.

In the course of their cooperation with the REC, local authorities were looking for answers to the following questions:

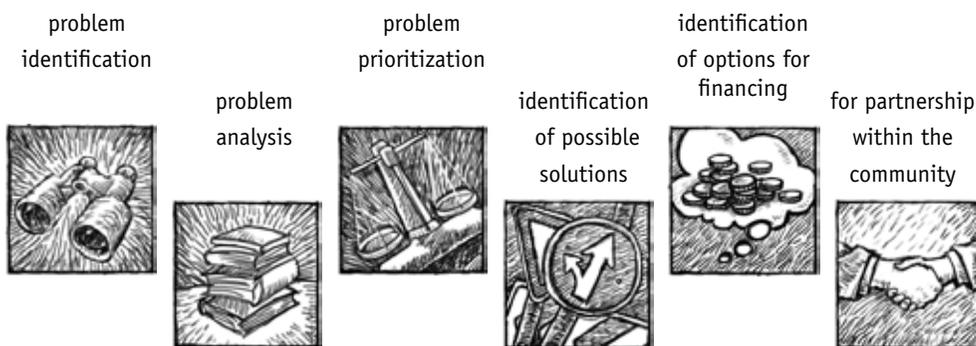
- Why is sustainable development the only reasonable solution for the future generations in the world, in Croatia, but also in our town?
- How should we use the existing natural and social resources (water, energy, forests, human resources) to improve the quality of life of the local communities?
- How and why other people do it?
- Shall we wait for the other people to offer us solutions, or we shall look for them ourselves?

Through the project of raising environmental awareness, strengthening sustainable development and promoting LA21 process among the local authorities and civil society, we attempted to encourage and strengthen:

- dialog between local authorities and the citizens, local organizations of civil society and private and business sector through new or stronger, both formal and informal connections;
- public awareness and information dissemination on the issues of environmental protection/sustainable development through interactive workshops, meetings and education materials;
- assessment and tailoring of the existing plans, programs and strategic planning by the local authorities.

In order to assess the willingness of the local authorities to accept these processes, consultations were held in Hrvatska Kostajnica, Samobor, Velika Gorica, Koprivnica, Dubrovnik. Furthermore, a series of workshops took place, first and foremost in Koprivnica and Hrvatska Kostajnica, and also for the representatives of all municipalities and active environmental organizations in the Zagrebačka County, and a presentation given for “green” activists in the Neretva delta region.

The Town of Koprivnica achieved best results in that process. With an aim to increase the quality of living of local populations and development of the local community, the local government adopted the Decision on developing Local Agenda 21 (LA21). Management board and workgroups were appointed, and started developing LA21 through the following steps:



By participating actively in developing environmental, economic and social welfare plans, the citizens assume a part of responsibility for improvement of their living environments and, together with the local government, they create conditions for healthier and better living.

Project web site: <http://www.rec-croatia.hr/eng/projects.php?id=70>

What we have learned through the project:

Who is in charge?

Contrary to the essence of the LA21 process, it is often thought in Croatia that environmental issues (frequently identified with the term “sustainable development”) should be tackled at the national level first, which mostly originates in the lack of financial means and unawareness of the possible solutions at the local level

Education?

With rare exceptions, local authorities in Croatia, especially smaller towns and municipalities, are not familiar enough with the significance of LA21 nor with the benefits it has for the local communities; education is therefore crucial to support sustainable development process, especially education of the leaders of authorities.

LA21 - obligatory or voluntary document?

Pursuant to Environmental Act (Official Gazette 82/94 and 128/99), the City of Zagreb, Counties, and other towns in Croatia are obliged to develop quadriannual Environmental Protection Programs, and State of Environment Reports. However, development and implementation of LA21 is not obligatory by Croatian laws, therefore is often disregarded in favour of mandatory documents.

Human resources?

Not all cities and municipalities have a person in charge of environmental issues, and these are the people who are logically considered to initiate the whole process. There is a lack of understanding that **all** the departments of local administration should participate in developing a document such as LA21.

Short-term objectives?

Local authorities and their representatives (leading people in municipalities and mayors) generally favour short-term objectives and solutions which could even become future problems in the same area. This often overlaps with their four-year term in office, during which time they try to collect brownie points for their political engagement, sometimes even without strategic plans and programmes.

Partnerships and public participation

Despite numerous challenges, citizens’ participation in environmental decision-making is gaining in scope. The largest obstacle could be the need to raise the citizens’ level of ownership of the process (‘there is nothing I can change’) and awareness of the local authorities (‘if we are on the opposite sides, we cannot gain mutual benefits’). However, numerous local authorities have been known to create and maintain good partnerships with civil and business sectors, those which could become the core of the future sustainable development process.

The Town of Koprivnica

How we got to Local Agenda 21

Municipal government of the Town of Koprivnica adopted the Aalborg Charter of Sustainable Cities as early as 2002 and thereby assumed the obligation to plan the town development based on the principles of sustainability. By signing the Charter, the town formally accepted the role of the basic unit of the local community which can operate systematically and efficiently towards implementing the idea of sustainability. Cities are main centres of human creativity, of production of goods and ideas, education, culture and science, as well as the places providing living and working conditions for its inhabitants. Cities are, at the same time, the largest consumers of goods and resources, the biggest polluters of the environment and major centres of human wealth and poverty, freedom and discrimination. The role of the cities is therefore critical: changes in lifestyle and treatment of human and natural resources should be initiated by the cities. Town governments should act as initiators of changes in decision-making process - as a key factor of sustainable development. The easiest way to present actions and results in the Town of Koprivnica towards achieving the given objectives is to present them simultaneously with the Aalborg commitments.



Koprivnica: a big small town - LA21 KC vision (photo: Nikola Wolf)

GOVERNANCE

The Town of Koprivnica has been making attempts to increase transparency of decision-making and to boost immediate information dissemination via all the available media, especially modern electronic and official website of the town. This kind of up-to-date reporting about all the events, decisions, documents and stages of project implementation in the town was recently upgraded by live radio broadcasting of municipal government and Town Council assemblies. The official website of the town is one of the most successful websites in the country: it was awarded the prize for the 10 best websites in Croatia, by Vidi Top Ten 2004. For its high level of cooperation and partnership with civil society, the town was acknowledged by the National Foundation for Civil Society Development. A great example of participation in decision-making is the town's Strategy of unique policy for the disabled, defined and implemented by the representatives of town authorities, representatives of associations, economy and media sector. The subsequent logical step would be continuous monitoring results of above mentioned cooperation its results, and reconsidering options for positive changes as defined by Local Agenda 21.

LOCAL MANAGEMENT TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

Implementation of this commitment is the most important role of the Local Agenda 21. Although the efficiency of the town administration was highly rated within the pilot project of assessing leadership and management strategy of the local self-government, conducted by the Council of Europe and the Croatian Association of Cities and Municipalities, further enhancement of this practice is necessary at an everyday level (sustainable procurement of goods and services), as well as sustainable decisions on important developmental documents, such as annual budgeting process.

NATURAL COMMON GOODS

It is a commitment of the cities to protect, preserve and ensure equal access to natural common goods, to protect natural heritage and green surfaces. The Town of Koprivnica responded to this commitment and has commenced the construction of a wastewater treatment plant, which is an investment worth 76 million kuna. This is to solve a long-time problem of pollution of the Bistra channel and one of the biggest problems of pollution of the river Drava.

Data on availability of the primary resources are truly impressive: 93% of the town's households have access to water supply, 83% of the households are covered by gas supply, whereas 76% have access to sewage system.

The first four strategies towards sustainable transport in the town, developed in 2002 within the European Mobility Week project, are beneficial to the environment as well: systematic elimination of architectural barriers, expansion of green surfaces, consistent network of biking paths and the Town Bike project. There is 28 ha of protected surfaces with 15 lines of trees in the town area. The park in the town centre and Danica memorial forest are

proposed for protection, and project on conservation and revitalization of the town walls and former arsenal has been developed as well.

Industrial subjects contribute to water protection: some of them, such as Carlsberg, Harmann and Podravka plants are also holders of international certificates (ISO 9001 and ISO 14001).

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND LIFESTYLE CHOICES

It is the obligation of the cities to accept and enable economical and efficient use of resources and to encourage sustainable consumption and production. Waste management is one of the major obstacles to fulfilling this Aalborg commitment. Consistent waste separation contributes to efficient waste management. The so-called 'green islands' are set up on 40 locations in the town: during the year 2004, this is where 62750 kg of paper, 479 m³ of PET plastic waste, 200 kg of metal waste, and 40 kg of batteries were collected.

Educational projects implemented in schools, kindergartens, associations and institutions, as well as Eco-schools programmes support the efforts to separate waste, whereas the 'green islands' in the suburbs contribute to reduction of number and size of illegal landfills and expenses for their rehabilitation. The town is clean; there is no garbage on the streets, which contributes to the positive image of the town and its citizens.

The project of rehabilitation of the Piškornica landfill is one of the largest projects in the town: 60 million kuna is invested, and it should be concluded in the year 2009.



First recycling yard in Koprivnica-Krizevci County (photo: Sanja Horvat)

Efficient lighting was introduced 5 years ago: despite the fact that the number of lamp-posts has considerably increased, with more than 15 km of new posts added, the electricity prices remained the same, which speaks to the possibility of finding simple ways to efficient use of resources!

Environmentally friendly lamps are used, in compliance with European standards, which contributed to considerable reduction of light pollution (inefficient artificial lighting causes light dispersion not only on desired surfaces, but also towards the sky).

Individual agricultural production is promoted, in compliance with environmental standards. Citizens nurture environmentally conscious lifestyle, and the majority of them contributes to appearances and *image of the most beautiful little medium town in Central Europe*, which is how people from Koprivnica like to call their town.

PLANNING AND DESIGN

'We are committed to a strategic role for urban planning and design in addressing environmental, social, economic, health and cultural issues for the benefit of all' (source: the Aalborg Charter)

The Town of Koprivnica manages its area primarily by making rational decisions on physical planning documents. Apart from the physical plan recently accepted by the Town Council, the plan is to develop urban plans for seven settlements. Three detailed physical plans are already developed, and two of them are in their drafting phase. Public hearings are conducted for all the interested citizens, presentations are organized and expert bodies and institutions are consulted.

The issue of urban density in city centre is discussed, preventive measures against illegal construction undertaken, infrastructure is provided in every part of the town and construction on farmlands is discouraged. Systematic conservation of cultural heritage and monuments is planned and conducted. Sustainable design and construction are promoted, as well as high quality architecture: e.g. new high-school building (pilot construction project, public-private partnership model), town swimming pools and schools.

BETTER MOBILITY, LESS TRAFFIC

Recognizing interdependence of transport, health and environment, cities are committed to strongly promoting sustainable town transport. The Town of Koprivnica did a huge step forward in this sense, relating all the sustainable transport strategies in the city to the European Mobility Week initiative, promoted by the European Commission. Koprivnica linked everyday developmental practice of sustainable town transport on bicycles to the ongoing European trend of reducing the number of cars in town centres: among 194 cities which took up this initiative, Koprivnica was declared the second most successful town in Europe in 2006. A widespread network of bicycle and pedestrian paths, active endorsement of cycling, promotion of bicycles and sustainable tourism - all this contributed to strengthening of another town brand, and Koprivnica was transformed into **Croatian town of bikes** within several years.



Introduction of sustainable transport strategies in Koprivnica has been recognised by Europe (photo: Town of Koprivnica archive)

This was acknowledged by the European Commission and ICLEI, but also by the fact that the quality of air has been improved, noise reduced, and the number of traffic accidents involving children, cyclists and pedestrians has dropped.

LOCAL ACTION FOR HEALTH

Our commitment is to protect and promote health and wellbeing of our citizens. The County Hospital programme 'Hospital - Friend of Newborns' provides systematic care for newborn children, but also offers help for the parents, through support and education. Pre-school institutions and kindergartens offer high-quality service. Family counselling has been established. The Town participates in the Network of Healthy Cities, which annually implements 5-10 projects involving health of the citizens.

VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE LOCAL ECONOMY

We are committed to creating and securing a vibrant local economy that gives access to employment without damaging the environment. High value of the Koprivnica economy is based upon large enterprises implementing the policy of sustainable development, as well as upon small and medium enterprises, the majority of which was created and developed partly through the town's incentives to entrepreneurs, through entrepreneurship zones and



Old handicrafts as part of Koprivnica tourist offer (photo: Nikola Wolf)

incubators and through the established Developmental Agency North, which includes the cities of Varaždin, Koprivnica, Bjelovar and Virovitica and the Međimurska County. Level of employment is gradually increasing, despite difficulties in the economic sector which are to be dealt with at local community level.

Sustainable tourism based on cultural and natural heritage, cycling and bike paths, old handicrafts, local cuisine and traditional customs, is regularly promoted.

SOCIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE

We are committed to securing inclusive and supporting living environments for all citizens.

Social programme of the Town of Koprivnica was acknowledged by the Croatian Association of Towns and Municipalities as an example of best practice. Within the framework of the Unique Strategy for the Disabled action plan, efforts are made to provide jobs for the disabled and the ones who have difficulties finding a job. Last year there were 14 such people employed. The Town of Koprivnica supports purchase of modern equipment for schools, awards successful teachers and students, and supports education of more than 600 students by giving away scholarships. The Town participates in the UNICEF action Cities and Municipalities - Friends of Children: one fourth of the town budget is allocated to children and youth care. Apart from offering a stable social welfare programme, Koprivnica expands possibilities of education for children, youth and adults, encourages activities and creati-

vity of young people and their participation in decision-making and social life of the town. Constant efforts are put into creating safe living environments, while housing problems are being taken care of systematically.

LOCAL TO GLOBAL

Just like all the sustainable cities, Koprivnica assumes responsibility for global problems of peace, justice, sustainable development, protection of climate, and biodiversity.

Intercity, national and international cooperation of sustainable cities is encouraged and implemented (ICLEI, Cities for Cyclists, Healthy City, Eco-schools, signatory cities to the European Mobility Week charter, signatories to the Aalborg Charter). Development of Local Agenda 21 is also one of the crucial steps on this path.



The disabled joined the "clean city" action (photo: Mario Puklek)



Workgroups in LA21 KC at the start of biological wastewater treatment plant construction (photo: Town of Koprivnica archive)

Local Agenda 21 in Koprivnica - initial steps

Apart from implementing a number of successful projects, programmes and actions, the Town of Koprivnica has worked towards raising awareness of the following:

- For the concept of sustainable town to become rooted in everyday life, all the activities should be reconsidered and reinforced by elements of sustainability if necessary, and then fused together under the same umbrella of sustainable development;
- Better information dissemination is needed to integrate urban activities into LA21 process; it is also necessary for the citizens to participate in decision-making, when it comes to the future of their town.

This is why the Town Council of Koprivnica accepted the offer to enter partnership with the REC in spring 2005 and started developing Local Agenda 21, strategic plan towards sustainable development of the town. This was not a sudden decision: it came out as a logical result of the previous activities in urban development planning, economic activities and civil society initiatives in Koprivnica. In a way, all of the sectors started preparing to develop this basic planning document a long time ago.

In summer 2005, the Town Council appointed the Local Agenda 21 Management Board; this was the formal beginning of the process. The first step of the Board appointed was to present the objectives and stages of development of the document to the public. The introductory seminar invoked great interest of many eager participants, and this is when the Environmental Forum was established as a large body of numerous citizens concerned - members of different associations, town administration, businesspeople and experts of

different profiles who declared a wish to participate with their active contribution and know-how. The Environmental Forum resulted in workgroups for environmental, economic and social issues, which assumed the practical part of the work. The groups have 10-15 members - representatives of economy, social, health, cultural and educational institutions, local districts, NGOs and local government.

Present and future of our town - what is appreciated, what is aspired?

The initial survey was carried out on the sample of approximately 700 citizens (a bit more than 2% of the town inhabitants). The results of the survey were useful for workgroups at defining values of the community and its most prominent issues. First concrete result of the survey conducted was printing of a leaflet on communal charges in the Town of Koprivnica, since the surveyed citizens expressed their wish to learn more about it.

Community values defined by workgroups refer to fairly well preserved landscape and environment, significant values as the result of human work, such as developed industry and preserved architectural heritage, as well as successful

The Environmental Forum adopted the vision for the future of Koprivnica: **Koprivnica: a big little town - open town, tailored to fit the human needs, large enough to meet all the functions necessary for quality and sustainable living, and small enough to allow every inhabitant to considerably contribute to community through his or her efforts.**



Title page of the leaflet on communal charges in the Town of Koprivnica

institutions meeting the needs for education, culture, healthcare, sport and a recreation, together with non-material values, such as strong sense of belonging to a community, but also openness towards new ideas and high degree of social sensitivity. There is evidently a strong wish to participate in the community; volunteer work is appreciated and special needs of all citizens considered.

Members of the workgroups exemplify these values perfectly, since their work is on voluntarily basis: they present the town with their time and know-how, for the benefit and prosperity of the whole community. While developing Local Agenda 21, members of the workgroups try to integrate the principles of sustainable development into their own organizations, by initiating small-scale projects or amending the existing projects based on the conclusions from workgroup meetings. All workgroups meet twice a month: in the meantime, they meet individually, or one workgroup meets the other workgroup tackling a similar subject matter. Workgroups in charge of economy and environment cooperate very often, since their subject matter is similar and overlapping, such as waste management or energy consumption.

Reports on workgroup meetings and their decisions are published on official website of the Town of Koprivnica www.koprivnica.hr, while the weekly magazine "Glas Podravine" offers a regular contribution dedicated to Local Agenda 21. To gain better insight into current state of affairs and issues, workgroups organize visits to locations where current projects are taking place (landfills, recycling yard, wastewater treatment plant, water pumping site) as well as site visits to the companies (Municipal utility company "Komunalac").

Development of Local Agenda 21 - LA21KC

The Town of Koprivnica develops its Local Agenda following the steps given in Illustration 2. After adopting the vision of the community, the first step is to identify problems in the town as objectively as possible, regardless of the areas concerned: environment protection, economy, or society in general. We cannot solve all the problems right away, bearing inadequate finances and other limitations in mind, so we have to rank them according to the certain criteria, e.g. how hazardous they are to the environment protection, people's health and quality of living. This step will finally result in description of the existing state of affairs in Koprivnica, together with its problems, causes and consequences.

After learning about the problems and their causes, we define the objectives for each of the priority problems. We can achieve our objectives by implementing all kinds of measures (e.g. educational, technological, legislative), which is why selection and ranking of the measures, projects and programmes will be conducted, based on the possibility of their implementation and their efficiency.

The final stage is drafting of the Action plan, which should include framework steps towards solving the problems in Koprivnica, with answers to the key questions: Who? What? How? When? Which funding?



This plan, reviewed by the local community and approved by the local government of the Town of Koprivnica, will be the platform for future implementation of LA21. Implementation of each step is to be monitored: if it is shown that programmes are not achieving the predicted results, in any stage of the implementation we can go back and modify any of the previous steps.

What are our weak points ?

It is noted that environmental issues are linked with ongoing projects in the town to a major extent: construction of wastewater treatment plant, rehabilitation of landfills, development of physical plans. Potential degradation of natural resources is also visible: air, soil and water are constantly asking for new ways and means of protection, which are mostly dependant on permanent education of populations and application of modern technologies. Some of these problems can be solved locally, but participation of the broader community is nevertheless needed: legislation should be amended and new environmental measures at the national level introduced.

Apart from a considerable number of large, successful companies, there is a number of smaller ones which cannot keep pace with the current market demands. Problems in the economic sector therefore have to do with insufficient education of entrepreneurs, especially the ones from the small and medium-scale enterprises: they are unaware of the modern technologies and legal framework of the Republic of Croatia as harmonized with the EU's *acquis communautaire*, which again results in lack of investments. This problem is especi-

ally visible in agricultural sector, where there is lack of education on how to use protective substances and fertilizers, on ecological agriculture and ways to place local products on the market. These problems are aggravated by extremely bad traffic infrastructure, as well as pending issues of waste disposal and irrational energy consumption.

The worse among social problems is unfavourable educational and age structure of the population. Numerous health and social problems originate in that kind of structure, starting from unemployment and lack of prospects, which result in increased addiction and violence rate, to the growing needs of senior citizens, the ill and disabled ones.

Plans for the future

As foreseen, public participation in developing Local Agenda 21 for the Town of Koprivnica has raised the citizens' awareness of the possible instant improvements which are, to a considerable extent, in their hands. Improvement in general knowledge of the ways how to impact project planning conceived by the town government is visible, and there is a positive feeling of joint efforts. Among first joint efforts was the big action of cleaning watercourses and rehabilitating illegal landfills in the town area on the occasion of the Earth Day, April 22, 2006.

Local Agenda 21 action plan for the Town of Koprivnica is to be finalized and adopted by the Town Council towards the end of 2006. However, the very process of drafting the document, presenting the conclusions of individual stages and discussing the draft with the Environmental Forum, as well as active information dissemination, has been recognized as a considerable contribution to the public awareness, in the sense that it presented the concept of sustainable development to the citizens and highlighted their need to act positively. Each progress made, coupled with acknowledgments of the positive results, is an additional boost, not only to the town government, but also to the citizens of Koprivnica: they are encouraged to act individually, contribute to the welfare of the society and ensure quality future of their children and grandchildren, as envisaged by Local Agenda 21 and as incorporated in the core principles of sustainable development.



*Non-governmental organisations participate in education of youngest Koprivnica citizens
(photo: Nikola Wolf)*

