

CROATIAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR HABITAT



Bulletin

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SUMMARY

HABITAT



**KORICA 2
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SUMMARY

1. **Welcoming Address** by Prof. Dr. Ivo Banac, Minister of Environmental Protection and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Croatia

It is a personal honour to congratulate the National Committee for Habitat of the Republic of Croatia, on behalf of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Spatial Planning, on the occasion of publishing the first issue of the Habitat Bulletin.

At a time when the urban population in Croatia is increasing, the pressure of inland and coastal urbanisation is mounting, while mountainous, island and rural areas are becoming depopulated, the National Committee for Habitat of the Republic of Croatia has been entrusted with the task of improving spatial planning, sustainable development of towns, as well as improve the quality of housing in line with the goals of the Programme of the United Nations for Habitat (UN-HABITAT).

Expressing satisfaction with the achievements of the National Committee so far, I wish them every success with their future work.

2. **Letter of Introduction** by Dr. Mladen Črnjar, President of the National Committee for Habitat of the Republic of Croatia

Development of modern society will largely depend on administering city growth. A city is the hub of activity and development today, although in many cities of the world slums represent the other side of the coin in that they suffocate growth, increase the divide between the rich and poor, cause the spread of epidemics and other problems. The United Nations is aware of the fact that activities on the margin of cities affect development overall. Thus, urbanisation is the most important area that demands global action. UN-HABITAT is the focal point for urban development within the UN system at a time when more than half of the world population live in towns and cities.

Global trends are reflected in Croatia very clearly. Two thirds of the country's population live in towns, while the main pressure of urbanisation is felt in cities and along the Adriatic coast. The Croatian Government views sustainable development of its cities as one of its most important priorities. The Strategy and the Programme of Spatial Planning of the Republic of Croatia, along with key national strategic documents, all incorporate elements of

the Habitat Agenda and principles of sustainable development of urban areas.

The Republic of Croatia is also a member of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT. During the past four years of its membership, Croatia has actively participated in the work of this international expert forum. A few years ago, the National Committee for Habitat of the Republic of Croatia was established, which instigated several activities at both the national and local level. For example, four pilot projects based on the Habitat Agenda were launched for the Primorsko-Goranska County and the Towns of Rovinj and Slavonski Brod, as well as the City of Zagreb. Educating civil servants on urban indicators and other elements of the Habitat Agenda was also successfully conducted. A particular mention should be made that substantial efforts have been invested in good governance and environmental protection at regional, city and local levels.

This year, 6 October marks World Habitat Day. The National Committee for Habitat in Croatia decided to celebrate this day by publishing the first issue of the Habitat Bulletin. I hope that this Bulletin will instigate new activities in the field of urban development in Croatia.

3. **HABITAT in Croatia** by Jadranka Vranek, Secretary of the National Committee for Habitat, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Croatia

The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) sent an initial mission to Croatia in 1993 for the purposes of establishing modalities of technical assistance in reconstructing and revitalising Croatian cities damaged during the war. Croatia actively participated at the Second Conference on Human Settlements held in Istanbul in 1996. There, the Habitat Agenda and Istanbul Declaration were adopted committing member states to implement the provisions contained therein. The follow-up process in Croatia was undertaken through regular reporting which assessed the spatial situation and information methods on spatial planning at national, regional and local institutional levels.

The Croatian Government decided to establish the National Committee for Habitat in 2000 in order to enhance activities pertaining to urban development and to adequately prepare for the forthcoming Special Session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda (Istanbul+5). The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Spatial Planning served as the focal point in this respect. A national report was prepared for the Special Session and the reconstruction of the Town of Ston was presented as a successful example of reconstruction techniques used in Croatia.

The National Committee adopted its programme of work for 2002-2004. Within the context of implementation of the Habitat Agenda and collection of indicators in line with Habitat methodology, four pilot projects were designed for the Primorsko-Goranska County, the City of Zagreb, and the Towns of Slavonski Brod and Rovinj. An educational program was drawn up aimed at civil servants in municipal and county institutions. The objectives of activities instigated by the Committee were to promote the principles of the Habitat Agenda and to contribute to urban development in Croatia. This initiative to publish the Croatian Habitat Bulletin will help to address problems of urban development and promote this area of activity to the wider public in Croatia.

4. **Activities by the Republic of Croatia in the UN-HABITAT** by Zlata Penić Ivanko, Member of the National Committee for Habitat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia

When UNCHS was established in 1978, two thirds of humanity lived in rural areas. Today, more than half of the world's population lives in cities and towns. Urbanisation has become a pressing global phenomenon. The United Nations Programme for Human Settlements (UN-HABITAT) was mandated with the task of promoting socially and economically sustainable cities, including adequate shelter for all in their spatial plans. Principles contained in the Habitat Agenda that are evident in every UN-HABITAT project include expertise know-how, linking normative guidelines with operative aspects of projects, innovative "pro-poor" financing and building strategic partnerships. The Millennium Declaration provides another global platform for development for the next 20 years and is complimentary in goals with the Habitat Agenda.

The Republic of Croatia was elected as a member to the Governing Council of the UN-HABITAT from 2000 to 2003. As a member, Croatia carried out intense activities during the Special Session of the General Assembly on Implementation of the Habitat Agenda in 2001, during which its national report was prepared and the Ston Town reconstruction project was presented. Its membership in UN-HABITAT also coincided with the activities of the National Committee for Habitat in Croatia, representing a pertinent link between efforts at the national and UN level. The first edition of the Croatian Habitat Bulletin reflects the process of dynamic urban development in Croatia.

At the last substantive session of ECOSOC in July this year, Mrs. Anna K. Tibajjuka, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, presided over the round table on "Urban-rural interface and slums", together with Dr. Ivan Šimonović, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the

Republic of Croatia, as Vice-President of the roundtable. The debate highlighted the importance of root causes of rural-urban migration, decentralised models of urbanisation, investments in infrastructure, all which in turn, represented crucial investments towards development overall.

5. ***Settlements and Housing*** by Aleksandar Bašić, member of National Committee for Habitat, Ministry for Environmental Protection and Spatial Planning of the Republic of Croatia

The linkage between spatial planning and housing deserves careful attention. The Croatian National Committee for Habitat initiated activities to prepare guidelines for the housing policy as part of Croatia's development strategy for the 21st century.

Important factors for raising living standards are stimulating measures in housing projects and improving legislative provisions on urban development. When defining the goals of a housing policy the following factors have to be carefully considered: housing systems and distribution of population, improvement of structurally weaker housing areas, standardising housing conditions, protection of spatial and environmental resources, and security issues.

The rapid growth of cities requires in turn, comprehensive and improved sustainable development in the ecological, economic, and social sense. A sound study of objectives and measures of sustainability, based on scientific, public and administrative guidelines, is absolutely an imperative. To ensure a high level of transparency for decision-makers and for the general public, sustainability objectives and indicators have to be straightforward and clear, as well as adaptable to constant adjustments in development processes and demands thereof.

6. ***In Search of Successful Cases of Housing Projects*** by Prof. Dr. Sonja Jurković, Member of the National Committee for Habitat, Lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb

It is not easy to write about successful cases of housing projects in Croatia when there is a constant shortage of housing facilities in urban areas and there is a deteriorating trend in housing conditions in towns. Croatia today is witnessing a rapid growth of estates comprising apartment housing that are sprouting up along the coastline and on its islands. These estates are only seasonally occupied, while during the remainder of the year they depict ghost towns. Lately in Croatia, spatial planning has been largely ignored and it would be interesting to establish all the causes of such negative trends.

On the other hand, there are successful cases of urban projects, namely in Stockholm, Berlin, Labin and Zagreb, to name a few. The construction of satellite settlements and examples of polycentric urban development, which include a socially sensitive approach, can be found in Sweden. Previously former East Berlin, and today part of a united Berlin, survived trends of depopulation thanks to well designed projects in sound spatial planning and environmental upgrading. Another successful project can be seen in the Croatian mine village of Labin (Istria), that was equipped with an entire requisite infrastructure. The capital of Croatia, Zagreb contains good examples of holistically planned suburbs of Travno, Dugave and Špansko.

In concluding, one can only ensure an acceptable and humane approach to housing development through awareness by a socially sensitive society, i.e. one that cares for its citizens, one that respects differences in the economic status of its citizens – though nevertheless tries to satisfy the common needs of its citizens. Furthermore, an ecological-sensitive approach to natural resources is equally important.

7. ***Pilot Projects on Urban Indicators*** by Tito Kosty, Architect, the Croatian Urban Institute, and Director of Pilot Projects

During 2002, pilot projects for standardising the monitoring of statistics using Habitat methodology were carried out. To achieve a balanced approach towards diverse types of urban areas, these pilot projects included the City of Zagreb, the Primorsko-Goranska County, the coastal Town of Rovinj and the continental Town of Slavonski Brod. Workshops were organised for the areas included in these pilot projects, being convened in each of the project locations, and a seminar on Habitat was convened in Zagreb.

The main goals of these pilot projects were the compilation of indicators for Croatian towns and urban areas, based upon Habitat urban indicators; the establishment of an indicators data base to serve as a basis for good urban governance; improvement of data exchange between providers and users; improvement of data bases to ensure participation in international projects.

The pilot projects pointed to the conclusion that it would be useful to turn the collection of urban indicators into a permanent activity. In this respect, it would be convenient to standardise collection systems and exchange of information used by different institutions in order to achieve in a democratic way transparency towards its citizens and decision-makers in the field of urban development.

8. **Publicly Funded Housing Programmes (POS)** by Alenka Košiča Čičin-Šain, Member of the National Committee for Habitat and Assistant Minister of Public Works, Reconstruction and Construction of the Republic of Croatia

The Publicly Funded Housing Programme in Croatia commenced in 2000 with the goal of addressing housing needs and improving housing conditions for a great number of its citizens as well as developing the construction industry in Croatia. This Programme entails systematically organised housing subsidised by public funds, which ensure participation at all levels of authority, both state and local.

The system of financing and implementing this Programme is in accordance with the Act on Publicly Funded Housing. Public funding includes funds provided by the Government and local authorities, while private citizens and banks pay the remaining amount.

Construction of the first facilities commenced in 2001. During three years 10,200 apartments were constructed according to standards laid down by the Economic Commission for Europe. It should be noted that public interest has been huge, and more than 100 towns and cities have started developing this type of housing system. Main obstacles faced in implementing this Programme are determining ownership and the slow adoption of spatial planning regulations.

9. **Regulatory documents for the spatial situation in Croatia** by Josipa Blažević-Perušić, Architect, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Spatial Planning

Spatial planning as an important function in the social and political sense can not be conducted without comprehensive reporting of the situation and development of spatial and housing structures and their interaction. In accordance with the Act on Spatial Planning of 1994, the following documents are in the process of being adopted: the Report on the Spatial Situation in the Republic of Croatia in 2003, and the Programme of Measures for Improving the Spatial Situation in the Republic of Croatia for 2004-2005.

The aforementioned Report is a comprehensive document by which the spatial situation in Croatia is assessed through a thorough analysis of several factors. These include: basic spatial structures (i.e. urban and rural areas, corridors of spatial development, systems of central villages/settlements, structure of land use); problems to be addressed; mutual and conflicting interests; possible future developments of spatial trends, as well as the state of spatial planning and institutional development in this area. This Report has the task of focusing on important factors concerning spatial planning and its role in Croatia's sustainable development during its process of integrating into the EU system.

According to the Report, the Programme of Measures for Improving the Spatial Situation defines specific measures for ensuring a balanced development as well as protection of the environment and space. The Programme will include a revised drafting of the Strategy and Programme of Spatial Planning, as well as other relevant documents in this area such as the Spatial Plan for Specific Geographic Regions (i.e. the Croatian Adriatic Zone).

10. ***An Integrated Approach to Spatial Planning and Environment in Cities***
by Antun Paunović, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Spatial Planning

It is very important to include environmental issues into integrated spatial and environmental planning in the very early stages. Croatian legislation necessitates public hearings on important objectives and drafting of spatial development policy at the stage of producing spatial and urban plans. However, it does not foresee decision making in stages. Public hearings and decision-making is conducted only after the strategic plan is drafted. Despite documents on spatial planning and environmental protection which promulgate excellent principles of sustainable development, in reality they are hard to materialise under the pressures of current social circumstances and contrasting interests.

The vast territory covered by cities in Croatia does not allow for a complete view of all the influences on environmental development and protection. Consequently, it is necessary to comprise in a conceptual and analytical way broader urban areas into regional spatial plans, while confined urban structures should be included into local plans.

A new draft Bill on Spatial Planning, which is presently before Parliament, introduces a set of substantive and procedural improvements, which will allow harmonisation of interests between spatial development and environmental protection. Part of the Bill deals with the enacting of provisions that regulate spatial interaction of urban areas, especially the cases of appropriation of new areas for building urban settlements.

11. ***Environmental Protection in Cities*** by Koraljka Vahtar-Jurković, Regional Institute for Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning of the Primorsko-Goranska County

According to data from the National Strategy on Environmental Protection (Official Gazette. No. 46/02), urban areas encompass approximately 12% of Croatia's inhabited territory with 63% of the population (2.840.000) living in 122 cities and towns. The most conspicuous problems in the area of environmental protection

include: provision of waste disposal, removal of waste waters, air quality, transportable water, noise levels, imbalanced urbanisation, lack of public spaces and green-belts, and the disregard of spatial planning.

The problem of environmental protection is present in all Croatian cities and towns, with specific features existing in regard to their geographic location, size, and level of centrality (i.e. the city and its role in its environment). Environmental protection is more complex in coastal areas and especially on the islands due to protecting the sea and its associated economic activities. The issue of environmental protection is viewed in the context of city life and activities vis-à-vis environmental elements (air, freshwater and seawater, natural and building heritage), and pressures on the environment created by the energy sector, traffic congestion and construction activities.

In order to deter further settlement in its big cities, the Croatian Government views as a priority the improvement of infrastructure and use of public transport, preventing the spread of cities over agricultural land and ecologically sensitive areas, and the encouragement of the use of ecologically acceptable materials by the building industry. During the last decade, numerous documents and provisions on environmental protection were adopted in the Republic of Croatia. Nevertheless, the information network and human resources at the local level are still lagging behind legislation, creating a gap between policy measures and their implementation.

12. ***The Coastal Town - Indicators of Sustainability*** by Dr. Lido Sošić, Andrea Puorro, and Katja Sošić

The growth of coastal towns is determined by their specific surroundings - the sea and the coast. Therefore, it is very important to determine the indicators for this area before establishing a policy for their sustainable growth.

Tourism greatly influences the relationship between towns and their environment in the coastal zones like Istria. It is important to establish the pressure that tourism exerts over the environment. Sea quality, naturalness of the coast, and access to the seaside, all fall into the category of important indicators that serve as a basis for guidelines on sustainable development in the coastal zone.

13. ***Sustainability Indicators for the Coastal Zone*** by Zoran Skala, County Institute for Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning

The Primorsko-Goranska County is one of Croatian leading regions regarding activities on local and regional sustainability. The County

has a very complex makeup of diverse landscapes and different economic activities attached to them, which makes sustainable and balanced development of its territory a challenging task. Only carefully selected and well-structured indicators can provide experts and the general public with sufficiently reliable information as to whether county development is maintaining the path of sustainability or not.

Most frequently used methods of designing sustainability indicators are elaborated together with comments on their practical features. The emphasis is on methods as to how the County should select its sustainability indicators. Above all, they should reflect the County's long-term vision of sustainable development, as well as the County's action plan and goals. This in turn requires involvement of all stakeholders in a consultation process prior to the indicators being finally selected. However, the process of selecting indicators should start with research of presently available data, e.g. who is collecting which data, how frequently, how they are stored, etc.

Analysis of indicators is a job for the experts. However, for an average Croatian County it might be difficult to organise and finance a centre with experts to undertake such work. A logical suggestion may be to consider teaming up several Counties to run one centre for sustainability indicators, probably for a "NUTS 2" statistical region.

14. ***Indicators of Sustainability for the Coastal Zone (Šibensko-Kninska County)*** by Darko Martinec, Member of the National Committee for Habitat

There are a number of documents that regulate spatial planning and promote sustainable development in Croatia today. However, the problem is not the lack of legislative regulation, or their low qualitative nature, rather the difficulty mainly lies in their implementation and in monitoring the level of their realisation.

The system of sustainability indicators should be established within the system of spatial planning by adopting reports on the spatial situation biennially, as well as devising a program of measures for improving the spatial situation regulated by the Act on Spatial Planning, together with the Strategy and Programme on Spatial Planning at the national level. This system has to be effective and defined in its implementation, with a limited number of indicators and standards. By defining and adopting indicators as well as standards of sustainability at national or regional levels, the spatial situation could be monitored more efficiently and competent decisions made concerning changes of certain spatial projects.

In conclusion, the Šibensko-Kninska County is an area where a

great deal of pressure from housing development is felt. There are many cases of violations of basic regulations on spatial planning at the local level. Therefore, the time has come to establish indicators and standards of sustainability at the national and regional level to change the trend and steer urban development towards a more effective and comprehensive system of planning and use of space.

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