

**BiH REAP Report from the Fair and Clean Energy Conference for NGOs
Follow up of the SEE Regional Conference
October 30, 2008**

On October 30, 2008, Mr. Markovic and Mr. Nisic (BiH REAP) attended a one-day NGO conference entitled Fair and Clean Energy for the Balkans, which was the follow up to the Regional NGO Conference that took place in June. The conference was organized by the Soros Foundation, Heinrich Bell Foundation and Center for Ecology and Energy from Tuzla, and was attended by some 20 NGO representatives from the region.

The main theme of the conference was the presentation of a new think-tank named “Western Balkans Energy Policy Forum”, whose establishment came up as an idea in the first NGO conference. A group of energy-related experts from the Western Balkan countries, headed by Mr. Mirza Kusljagic, got together around the idea to create a think-tank for energy-related policy issues in the region.

The group, which is still in the initial phase of establishment, presented a general paper on establishing an Energy Policy Forum and Initial Position Paper on Western Balkans Energy Policies. Also, the group presented the NGO community with its first paper titled “Statement to the First Social Forum.” This paper was prepared to be presented at the upcoming First Social Forum of Energy Community in Tirana.

During discussion that involved a wide range of energy policy-related topics, Mr. Markovic addressed NGO representatives and presented USAID REAP and its goals, the importance of implementation of the Energy Community Treaty, goals of the Treaty, democratization of decision-making processes and the need for NGOs to find their place in those processes. Mr. Markovic shared with the audience REAP’s successful efforts in lobbying FBiH parliamentarians and informing the media and suggested NGOs use similar techniques to achieve their goals.

The conclusion of the conference was that the regional NGO community welcomes establishment of the Western Balkan Energy Policy Forum and offers to take an active role in the Forum’s activities. NGOs are willing to organize themselves in some sort of regional network that would deal with energy policy issues and expect the conference organizers to assist them in this effort.

REAP learned that there is a lot of negative sentiment among the NGO community towards the Energy Community Treaty and that it emanates primarily from the lack of understanding of the Treaty goals and its benefits to the region as a whole, as well as to each member country.

During the conference Mr. Markovic and Mr. Nisic met with Ms. Dobrila Govedarica, BiH Soros Foundation Director. All came to the same conclusion that when it comes to energy issues, NGOs waste their energy in aiming at the wrong targets; and there is a lack of basic economic information on energy potentials, capacities, needs, and trends. We discussed ideas on how to help the NGO community assume its role in the energy sector reform process; one of the ideas that crystallized was to organize an event dedicated to provide accurate information to the NGO community on the Energy Community Treaty and how they can get involved in the democratic process of energy policy creation. Soros Foundation could be organizer and provide logistics, while REAP could provide expertise and technical assistance and help identify expert speakers. There will be a follow up discussion with Ms. Govedarica on this idea.

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