

focus

association for sustainable development

annual report 2003

Ljubljana, 5th January 2004

Focus Association for Sustainable Development is a young environmental NGO. The aim of Focus is to actively contribute towards the improvement of natural and social environment. Focus acts mainly in the following fields: sustainable development, climate change, energy, transport, waste management, agriculture, tourism, water and air. The activities of Focus encompass: organizing lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences, awareness raising, cooperation with like-minded associations, organisations and networks, consulting and cooperating with the government, governmental and local institutions, businesses and other stakeholders, communication with the media and other activities that might contribute to reaching the aim of Focus.

In its starting year, 2003, Focus had the following projects and activities:

Use of biomass on Pohorje

Background of the project: In 2001 the energy concept of the Municipality of Zreče was elaborated. The concept predicts that by 2004 some parts of the Municipality will use biomass for district heating and also for heating of individual households. Low awareness and communication challenges represent an obstacle for implementing the plan.

Project description: Focus decided to organise a seminar on the use of biomass and a presentation of a practical example. The aim of the seminar and the presentation was to inform the participants about the use of biomass, train them for communicating the idea to other people and improve the awareness and access to information of the potential users of biomass through a simple brochure. The seminar's target group were the representatives of the local authorities and communities, but also interested individuals and companies that work in the biomass field. The seminar presented the topics, covered in the brochure, but with more detailed explanations. The brochure contains information about the reasons for using biomass, advantages and risks of using biomass, technologies for using biomass, financial perspective, additional literature and information access and efficient use of energy. The brochure was published in 800 pieces and sent to about 600 households in the mountain parts of Municipality of Zreče. In the follow-up of the project another seminar is planned if there is interest from the municipality. The Slovene Agency for Efficient Use of Energy expressed interest in reproducing the brochure for the large parts of Slovenian population (in 10000 copies). The work is currently in progress. Arising from the project is also the interest of local small-scale wood companies to start producing pellets from the leftovers of their production. Many households have contacted the offices for efficient use of energy in the area due to the project.

The project was implemented with the financial support of the Agency for Efficient use of Energy, Municipality of Zreče and the Swedish NGO Secretariat on Acid Rain and in co-operation with the Slovene E-Forum.

Efficient use of gas in Zreče

Background of the project: Recently the last phase of development of a system for gas distribution was finished in the Municipality of Zreče. Many households got attached to the gas distribution pipelines, but a lot of them still use oil and not gas for heating. Even though gas is not a renewable source of energy, in a short term it is preferred to oil, which causes more greenhouse gas emissions. That is why it was needed to inform the households about the potentials of using gas instead of oil.

Project description: Focus organised a public round table and its aim was to inform the public about the use of gas through the debate and presentations from experts. At the round table five presentators highlighted various perspectives about the use of gas. The importance of using gas from the environmental perspective was covered, as well as the financial, the technological and the political aspect. Experience on oil-to-gas switch was shared by one of the gas-using households. The debate after the presentations was mainly focused on the financial and technological aspects because that was the most interesting issue for the households who participated in the round table. At the round table a small pamphlet was given to the participants, listing the most important facts and information

on the use of gas. The pamphlet was also distributed to the households that are attached to the gas system, but do not use gas and were not present at the workshop. The project was implemented with the financial support of the Agency for Efficient use of Energy, Municipality of Zreče and the Swedish NGO Secretariat on Acid Rain.

Commenting the National Greenhouse Gases Reduction Programme

With the commenting period of only one week, the Slovene Greenhouse Gases Reduction Programme was open for public comments. Focus wrote a letter with comments to the proposed Programme to the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy. The letter highlighted the expected efficiency of the programme and lack of clear priorities and defined activities. The letter was communicated also to the other NGOs in Slovenia and comments were included. There was absolutely no reply from the Ministry to the letter and none of the comments from the letter was included in the proposed Programme.

Green fiscal reform

Background of the project: Due to incorrect market signals the natural resources are used inefficiently and unsustainably. The use of natural resources is not properly evaluated because not all the costs of use of natural resources are internalized in the price. This problem can be related to the incorrect allocation of tax burden. Human effort (labour) is taxed heavily, while the use of natural resources is quite often not taxed at all or is taxed insignificantly. All that leads to a situation in which the market gives wrong signals.

Project description: To solve the upper problem it is important that the existing fiscal system in Slovenia undergoes an environmental reform, which means that the burden of human effort taxes should be shifted to environmental taxes. In Slovenia there is almost nothing done in this field and the Slovene government is not aware of the advantages of such reform for the Slovene economy in the process of accession to the EU. That is why Focus decided to publish a brochure on the idea of environmental fiscal reform. Around the publication a network of Slovene NGOs was built that will work on the fiscal reform issues. The brochure explains what is environmental fiscal reform, what are the advantages of such a reform for Slovenia and the experience of such reforms in the EU Member States. The brochure was printed in 550 copies and presented to the government and the interested public through a presentation. Before the presentation a press conference took place, through which the brochure was presented to the media and the wider public. The brochure was also presented to the students of economics and business as they are the future decision makers in the fiscal field. Articles about the brochure appeared in some of the major media and in response we were invited to many events to present the ideas of green fiscal reform.

The project was implemented with the financial support of the Office of the Government of Republic of Slovenia for Informing and the Swedish NGO Secretariat on Acid Rain and in co-operation with Umanotera, Slovene Foundation for Sustainable Development, oikos Ljubljana, Student Organisation for Sustainable Economics and Management and the European Environmental Bureau.

Participation in capacity building training for NGOs

Focus participated in the capacity building process for NGOs. The process consisted of:

- a workshop with the mentors of Focus, in which the vision and the SWOT analysis, as well as the future orientations and activities of Focus were developed;
- co-operation with the mentors for developing a vision of the NGO;
- a workshop for NGOs on how to communicate with the media and write press releases;
- a workshop for NGOs on how to make an efficient and interesting presentation;
- a workshop for NGOs on how to organise own work and make it more efficient.

NGO workshop on climate change

The workshop aimed at bringing together Slovene environmental NGOs and informing them about the latest developments in the field of climate change in Slovenia and worldwide. The workshop also aimed at providing a forum for the NGOs to build partnership among them and harmonise their standpoints concerning the renewable sources of energy in Slovenia. The objectives were partially achieved. Due to the lack of interest from the side of the NGOs that are normally contradicting to each other in terms of use of renewables in Slovenia it was not possible to start building a dialogue. Therefore in 2004 some other ways of attempting to build a dialog will be used, such as bilateral meetings and perhaps another workshop based on the bilateral meetings. The project was successful

in drawing attention to the numerous evidences of climate change in Slovenia and in highlighting the lack of concerted NGO action in the climate field in Slovenia. This challenge will have to be addressed in the future.

The project was implemented with the financial support of the Swedish NGO Secretariat on Acid Rain and in co-operation with dr. Lučka Kajfež-Bogataj, a member of the IPCC.

Various

Apart from the listed projects and activities, Focus had various interventions, contributions and co-operations. Focus also participated in numerous meetings, conferences or workshops. The list below shows some of the contributions and participation occasions:

- presentation at the 'EU Wednesdays' event on climate change and its dimensions in the EU;
- presentation at the oikos Energy Conference 2003 on climate change with focus on emission trading;
- contributions to the Declaration on Renewables of the Slovene NGOs;
- collection of energy, health and transport data of Slovenia for a research of the Charles University from Prague;
- participation in the European Environmental Bureau seminar on environmental fiscal reform with focus on competition arguments;
- participation in the Transport & Environment workshop on use of structural funds in CEE;
- contribution to the Pinocchio project of Umanotera (parts of research and chapter in the publication; presentation in the press conference and interventions in the presentation for the public);
- contribution to the WWF project CEE 8 Progress Report (analysis of implementation of the Renewables Directive in Slovenia);
- contribution to the glossary of climate related terms in Slovene;
- presentation of the positions of the NGOs regarding the EU Emission Trading Directive at the European Commission/CCAP meeting in the Chamber of Commerce of Slovenia;
- interventions at the meeting of the Climate Change Council regarding the National GHG Reduction Programme;
- participation in the REC workshop on Strategic Environmental Assessment and PRTR Protocol;
- initiation of meetings with representatives of other Slovene NGOs on possible transport related projects in Slovenia;
- participation in the Globe Slovenia meeting on Renewables and Energy Efficiency in the Parliament;
- participation in the Globe Slovenia and Slovene E-Forum event on occasion of the 10th anniversary of Slovene E-Forum;
- participation in the process of building of the NGO Strategy for Partnership with the Government;
- meeting with the Klimabundnis in Austria;
- participation in the initial meetings around the National Self-assessment of Capacity Building Needs under the GEF project with REC Slovenia;
- meeting of PROBACE for JI and CDM promotion in Slovenia;
- co-operation with the Agency for Efficient Use of Energy on re-publishing the biomass brochure;
- contribution to the expert basis for the National GHG Reduction Programme of the Institute of Jozef Stefan;
- participation at the presentation of the National Energy Programme draft;
- going through a REC training for young environmentalists in Szentendre;
- participation at the presentation of the Slovene National Communication I to the UNFCCC;
- presentation at the press conference on occasion of climate day on 15th May with Slovene E-Forum;
- participation in the CAN CEE General Assembly (Focus as a founding member);
- presentation of environmental fiscal reform at a business conference;
- participation in the workshop on registries of GHG for Slovenia;
- initiating a network building among some of the Slovene NGOs;
- participating in the action of securing a more proper National Energy Programme for Slovenia.

Plan vs reality

Focus aimed at concentrating its activities in the following four fields in 2003: energy, climate change, tourism, Local Agenda 21. In the field of energy the planned activities were fulfilled. In the field of climate change the planned activities were also fulfilled. The tourism field activities were fulfilled only up to a certain extent – a questionnaire was elaborated, with which the environmental awareness of tourist workers in the Pohorje area can be assessed. Due to the heavy workload in the other fields the questionnaire has not been sent around yet. In the field of Agenda 21 the municipality of Zreče did not progress with the work as it should and there was also no attempt to involve civil society in the work at all. Therefore the activities planned in that field were not fulfilled.

In spite of the partial fulfillment of the plan we assess that the work of Focus in 2003 was effective and successful. Although there was not enough time allocated to some activities, that time was usefully spent for some other activities.

Co-operation

The activities of Focus in 2003 were implemented in close co-operation with the following organisations and institutions: Slovene E-Forum, CAN CEE, REC, Umanotera, Vitra, Center for energy efficiency of the Josef Stefan Institute, oikos Ljubljana, Municipality of Zreče and the local communities in Zreče area.

Financial report

incomes in 2003	
Swedish NGO Secretariat for Acid Rain	523 506 SIT
Agency for Efficient Use of Energy	500 000 SIT
Municipality of Zreče	300 000 SIT
Office of the Government of Republic of Slovenia for Informing	200 000 SIT
Membership fees	15 000 SIT
total	1 538 506 SIT
(1 EUR = 236 SIT)	6520 EUR

The incomes in 2003 also consisted of about 1 500 000 SIT (6350 EUR) of in-kind contributions of Focus members, such as use of office, use of equipment, voluntary work and office materials.

expenses in 2003	
operational costs	
- banking,	7190
- telephone	63000
- office supplies,	39899
- post,	14475
- representation	11034
depreciation costs	4500
honoraria	528300
taxes	74700
travel expenses	119710
printing	168120
total	1070762
total (1EUR = 236 SIT)	4537 EUR

