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Report on the Stockholm+50 National Consultation in Serbia

Final report

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Stockholm +50 National Consultation Report

1. National Consultation at a Glance

Please enter the basic information about the consultation.

In-person or hybrid national consultation

Consultation dates (list the dates of all individual events if more than one event was conducted)	<p>13th April 2022 – a high-level kick-off event – launching of the process of National consultations in Serbia and the SparkBlue platform;</p> <p>09th May 2022 – Environment and Health – focus on health issues, local self-government and the businesses sector and their role in sustainable development;</p> <p>10th May 2022 – Stockholm+50 National consultations in Serbia – Dialogue for youth - organized in cooperation with UNICEF;</p> <p>12th May 2022 - Stockholm+50 National consultations in Serbia, Focus group for civil society organizations and presentation of a survey on sustainable development;</p> <p>20th May 2022 – Closing event - Green Society and Sustainable Living - presentation of the draft National report and celebration of World bee day, organized with the Embassy of Sweden</p>
Lead national partner(s) / focal point(s): title and institution	<p>The Ministry of Environmental Protection – Ms Sandra Dokić, Assistant Minister</p> <p>The Cabinet of the Prime Minister – Ms Slavica Đukić-Dejanović, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister</p>
Type(s) of consultation (in-person, virtual, hybrid)	All five consultation meetings have been organized in person.
Geographic focus (national, provincial, local)	National and local
Total number of hours in live sessions (provide one cumulative number in case of several events)	27 hours
Live streaming (Yes/No)	Yes
Link to the recording(s)	<p>13th April 2022 – link; link; link.</p> <p>09th May 2022 – link</p> <p>10th May 2022 – link</p> <p>12th May 2022 – link</p> <p>20th May 2022 – link</p>

Total number of participants	527
Total Number of online participants (till 21st May)	475

Number of participants by age range													
0-18	37	19-30	76	31-50	245	51-65	99	66-80	8	80+	0	Prefer not to say	62

Number of participants by gender					
Male	174	Female	352	Other/Prefer not to say	1

Number of participants from each stakeholder group			
Government – National	86	Science, Academia	63
Government - Local	41	Foundation, philanthropy	7
United Nations	36	Women and Women Groups	0
International Financial Institution	0	Youth	70
Bilateral / Foreign Governments	8	Local Community	0
NGO – International	10	Faith-based groups	0
NGO / CSO – national	59	Indigenous Peoples	1
Private sector (large)	10	People with disabilities	0
Small and Medium Business	17	Other	65
Consumer Group	1	Prefer not to say	53

Number of participants from each sector					
Agriculture & Food	20	Government	19	Traditional Energy	1
Cities	11	Green energy	10	Trade & Commerce	2
Education	31	ICT	0	Transport	7
Environment	182	Industry	11	Utilities	15
Extractives	2	Infrastructure	9	Other	110
Finance & Investment	1	Health	2	Prefer not to say	80
Fisheries & Aquaculture	0	Media	2		
Forestry	11	Tourism	1		

Government participation			
Office of President / Prime Minister	7	Ministry of Planning / Economy / Finance	3
Parliament		Ministry of Environment / Nature Resources	38
Cabinet of Ministers		Ministry of Energy	5
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1	Ministry of Agriculture & Food	5
Local Governments	31	Line Ministries (other)	6

SparkBlue Online Consultations

Launch date	13 th April 2022
Consultation length (total number of weeks)	5 weeks
Total number of participants	32 members
The number of thematic discussions supported	5
Total number of comments in the online discussion	21
Link to consultation page	LINK

2. Consultation Process including Gender Responsiveness and Inclusivity

Please provide a description of the consultation process and timeline that reflects the whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach used including:

- What preparatory meetings were organized over what time period and when was the main consultation; were they in-person, virtual or a combination, where did they take place?
- Who were the main national and international stakeholders and speakers invited and what sectors/themes/institutions were represented?
- What other national and sector policy consultation processes were involved or referenced including NDCs, NBSAPs, INFFs, SDG Strategies, Green/Blue Economy and Green Recovery Plans, etc.?
- How was the consultation promoted in advance, during and afterward through communications and media?

During the preparatory phase, several working and brainstorming meetings have been organized in the period from the 28th of February till the end of March. The purpose of these meetings was to identify key stakeholders and potential partners, exchange ideas and design the whole process so to ensure an effective and efficient whole-of-government and the whole-of-the-society approach. The meetings also discussed some challenges to the implementation of the process (such as the elections and the Easter holiday) and how to overcome them. Most of the meetings were in-person, while when it was not possible meetings were organized as virtual or hybrid events.

During the consultation phase (beginning of April till the 20th of May) five in-person meetings have been organized with various stakeholders from all sectors and with almost 100 speakers and moderators, who participated in various sessions (panel discussions, workshops, dialogues, presentations and even a symbolic tree planting).

The Ministry of Environmental Protection (MoEP) in cooperation with the Cabinet of the Prime Minister were nominated government authorities that played a key role and actively cooperated with the UNDP team in designing and implementing the whole consultation process. During the events organized, as a line ministry, the MoEP was represented in almost all sessions. Besides the MoEP, other line ministries and national, as well as local authorities were also well represented. Meetings were attended by representatives or speakers from the union of municipalities (Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities), Chamber of Commerce, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, UN Agencies, the World Health Organization, the Embassy of Sweden, international organizations, Delegation of the EU, representatives of youth, NGO sector, institutes, educational institutions, various public authorities and many others.

The events organized addressed the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including monitoring and indicators which is under the responsibility of the Statistical Office of Serbia. One session of the kick-off event was also dedicated to nature and biodiversity protection where the participants discussed the development of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP).

The whole consultation process was promoted through an intensive campaign through social media (UNDP's Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter accounts [FB](#), [IG](#), [LI](#), [TW](#)), but was also very well covered by national and other media in Serbia. The promotion was coordinated with the Embassy of Sweden and other partners before, during and after the process. An intensive campaign is organized from the 20th of May till the 2nd of June to promote the results of the process, to inform general public in Serbia about the finalization of the National report and the upcoming Stockholm event. This part of the campaign started with the Closing Event/ceremony organized with the Embassy of Sweden in the Botanical garden in Belgrade and continued through concerted action on social and other media during 12 days, before the Stockholm event.

Please summarize how various stakeholder groups that are not traditionally involved in these processes and may be under vulnerable conditions or marginalized, including women, youth, indigenous peoples, local communities, people with disabilities, and others, were engaged in and contributed to the consultation.

What efforts were made to invite, engage, and ensure effective participation of various marginalized stakeholder groups in the national consultation process (i.e., meetings/settings, materials in local languages, accommodation for people with disabilities, childcare, safe and affordable transportation, connectivity, targeted communications, etc.).

The entire process of national consultations was organized in a way to enable as many interested persons as possible to participate and contribute to the creation of a national long-term vision for sustainable development. Invitations were distributed through mailing lists and the SparkBlue platform together with links and QR codes for live streaming of all organized meetings. This approach enabled all interested parties to follow the meetings, participate in the discussions, and submit comments and proposals during the entire consultation process. All meetings were organized in Serbian language with translation to English, in order to enable participation of local communities, elderly people and all those who otherwise could not participate due to the language barrier. Also, all documents (save-the-date notes, invitations and agendas) were prepared in Serbian and English language to facilitate organization and encourage all stakeholders to participate.

In addition to this, and based on the significant interest noticed during the kick-off event shown by the youth, and in cooperation with UNICEF, one dedicated meeting for young persons has been organized on 10th May. The meeting convened approximately 50 young persons to discuss the challenges of sustainable development through three parallel workshops. In three facilitated discussions, participants showed not only a high level of interest but also impressive knowledge, general information about the topics and creativity.

During the organization of the meetings, particular attention was given to adequate representation of women in panel discussions and in the audience, as well.

3. Main Consultation Inputs, Insights and Innovations

This is the core of the report, which summarizes the main takeaways of the consultation.

An overview of the main themes, challenges, opportunities, solutions and recommendations

This is a summary of Section 3. Please respond to this question after addressing the other questions under this section.

Key themes and sectors discussed

Regarding the themes covered, besides the three leadership dialogues, the consultations addressed:

- i) the overall state of the environment;
- ii) climate challenges (mitigation and adaptation);
- iii) pollution;
- iv) nature protection and biodiversity;
- v) protection of pollinators and the role they play in ecosystems;
- vi) post-covid recovery;
- vii) relations between the state of the environment and health;
- viii) the role of local self-government and the business sector in sustainable development and green transition;
- ix) the role of youth; and
- x) the role and involvement of civil society organizations in the green transition.

Challenges discussed

- Climate changes and the importance of the energy sector, having in mind that 70% of electricity is produced in thermal power plants;
- Improving cross-sectoral cooperation and greater involvement of all relevant authorities and other stakeholders in policy-making processes;
- Strengthening capacities for enforcement of the existing legal framework;
- Waste management, wastewater treatment, waste electrical and electronic equipment disposal and treatment;
- Transition from linear to circular economy in terms of resource efficiency and creating markets for climate-neutral and circular products;
- Reduction of the number of individual fireboxes and replacement of technology in households, as well as addressing high emissions stemming from the transport sector;
- To prepare the business sector for the announced Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, which may represent an impediment for products and services from Serbia to be placed on the EU market.

Opportunities discussed

- Engagement of each individual is important, while education and awareness-raising are vital for broader involvement of individuals;
- Exploiting the potential of the Green Agenda as a key strategic document, financial, technical support and cooperation opportunities it offers, to facilitate sustainable development and green transition;
- Maximise the engagement of local governments and mobilize resources to speed up the green transition in the areas of waste management, energy management, air quality, green procurement, etc.;
- Harness the huge potential in youth that showed interest to support green transition through volunteering actions, participation in the policy-making processes and through education. This represents an important opportunity that relevant institutions, including the education sector, should exploit.

Solutions discussed

Improvement of the institutional framework for sustainable development. Development of a comprehensive National Development Strategy. Strengthening cooperation and coordination among institutions. Adoption of the new revised Nationally Determined Contribution with increased climate ambition. Development of a new paradigm in relations between humans and nature. Education and awareness-raising at different/all levels. Development of stable and sustainable financing mechanisms. Strict enforcement of the existing legal framework. Besides the legal framework - voluntary instruments and international standards. Development of a systemic approach that will enable inclusiveness. Increasing availability and transparency of scientific research, finding and data.

Recommendations suggested

- The change in the way we use resources and energy, following the Green Agenda principles, EE and RES targets;
- Continuation of investments in environmental protection and blending financial sources, accompanied by increasing absorption capacities;
- Strengthening of inter-institutional coordination based on innovative knowledge management;
- Strengthening the trust in institutions and systems. The lack of investments is not the result of scarcity of money, but very often the lack of trust and security for investments and unpredictability;
- Addressing climate challenges (adaptation and mitigation) as well as greater deployment of nature-based solutions;
- Joint commitment and action, inclusive dialogue and participation of all stakeholders;
- Education and capacity building at all levels, as well as the participation of the youth;
- Developing and improving the system of rewards/subsidies, but also penalties in case of non-compliance and in case of causing damage to the environment;
- Replication of best practice examples, particularly at the local level, learning from each other, financing, supporting and encouraging innovations in the sustainable development area.

Summary of the discussions under each Stockholm+50 Leadership Dialogue theme and their guiding questions.

Leadership Dialogue 1. Reflecting on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all

1. How can we restore and regenerate a positive relationship with nature? List 2 or 3 good practices and pathways that your partners would like to see scaled up to enable a move to a healthy planet?

In the last 10-15 years, since the last IPBES Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, a lot has been done to protect and restore nature in Serbia. However, as **the biological diversity at the global level continues to decline**, it is not enough.

Good examples of protecting and restoring nature are creating **adequate framework** and **education**:

During the last 7 years, the legislative and **strategic framework for nature protection has been improved significantly**. The government adopted 23 laws and around 200 by-laws, while additional 5 laws and 4 strategic documents in the environment area are ready for adoption. This includes the revised Nationally Determined Contribution in line with the increased ambitions under the Paris Agreement. The Nature Protection Programme 2021-2023 is also adopted but it needs to be revised in line with the most recent global framework. In addition to this, **Nature-based Solutions (NbS)** are getting importance in the scientific community and decision-making authorities in Serbia, showing understanding and interest in their greater deployment. However, despite very good progress in developing the legal framework, there is still a space for its better enforcement.

In its endeavours to protect nature, the Government also signed the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda (November 2020) and committed to intensifying its activities on biodiversity protection and forestation. At least **30% of territory has to be protected** as per the new Green Agenda objective.

There is a general lack of awareness among citizens about nature protection, therefore the Nature Protection Institute, often supported by various partners, is organizing **educational campaigns at different levels** - from kindergartens to faculties. Besides this, the Institute has its **own publishing activities for education of citizens**.

Youth: It is important to introduce a system of **subsidies and penalties** for those who produce damage to nature, **strengthen the enforcement of the legal framework**, maximise the **use of social media and podcasts for education and awareness-raising** and **control big polluters**.

2. What are the actions that your country/partners would take to scale up the change towards a healthy planet? What policies/structures need to be in place for you to take such action?

Despite good progress in preparing the legal framework, which is chiefly driven by the EU alignment process and facilitated by opening the negotiation Cluster 4 in December 2021, still, **the enforcement needs to be strengthened.**

During the consultation process participants emphasized the need to strengthen the implementation and enforcement of the existing legal framework, which includes the need to strengthen the **capacities of relevant authorities.** In addition to this, participants repeatedly stressed the need to **strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation/cooperation** among ministries and other authorities in policy-making processes, particularly in order to ensure **mainstreaming of environmental requirements in the development of other policies.**

In order to speed up the changes toward a healthy planet, the **scientific community has to be more involved** in the policy-making processes. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the existing cooperation among all stakeholders, since this is the most efficient way to find the best possible solutions that will result in healthier planet.

Establishing a **stable and sustainable financing mechanism** is another precondition for improving the health of the planet. Besides financial support from the international community, there is a strong need for own investments, **establishing of a Green Fund similar to funds in European countries,** that will ensure that the funds collected following the polluter-pays principle, are used for remediation of damages in nature.

3. How could marginalized and vulnerable groups benefit from policies and initiatives designed to restore a more sustainable and resilient relationship with nature (that mitigates nature risks)?

The fight against pollution and nature degradation is also a fight for fairness and equality. Pollution's **most harmful impacts on human health are typically borne by the most vulnerable groups,** such as poor, children, elderly, and people with chronic conditions. Having in mind that vulnerable groups are most impacted, they will benefit the most from the improved conditions and advanced relations with nature.

The Government of Serbia with the support of the UNDP Office is working on the National Climate Adaptation Plan which should bring concrete measures related to the construction of wastewater treatment plants, early warning systems for natural disasters, climate-resilient infrastructure and afforestation. Last year the new Climate Change Law was also adopted. This legal act should also reduce threats from disasters and extreme weather events which chiefly impact the vulnerable groups (as was the case with the 2019 heatwave in Europe that caused 2.500 deaths). The adaptation and fight against climate change should also ensure **a stable food supply and prevent fluctuation of food prices** that can impact the poor and children.

Youth and other vulnerable groups are expressing their interest for environmental protection, so it is necessary to find a mechanism which will enable their proper representation and participation in activities of various national and other bodies.

4. How can we safeguard the rights of people and nature, including among others, indigenous peoples and local communities, environmental defenders, women, youth, future generations?

As of October 2021, access to a healthy environment is a **newly recognized human right**. Safeguarding the right of all persons, particularly local communities, indigenous people, environmental defenders and vulnerable groups should be ensured through proper enforcement of horizontal legislation in place, as well as through public participation in policy-making processes (as defined by the Constitution and Aarhus convention). Therefore, the Stockholm+50 initiative is one good example of providing an opportunity for various stakeholders to be heard.

Another example of safeguarding the rights of local communities is through the designation of protected areas in line with Natura 2000 requirements and the new EU Biodiversity Strategy framework. Unfortunately, in Serbia, only 8% of the territory is protected, while only 5 % out of it, is strictly protected area.

Raising awareness and education about nature protection and human rights is another path towards improving relations with nature.

Youth: An **effective system of penalties** should be in place as a mechanism for deterrence/prevention, but also for punishment of those who produce damage in nature and collection money for remediation.

5. What are the new or prioritized set of metrics and indicators needed for tracking our progress towards a healthier and more prosperous planet?

The Statistical Office of Serbia is the national authority in charge of tracking the progress towards a healthier and more prosperous planet through monitoring the implementation **of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. As of 2017, the number of available indicators increased from 43 to 110 (out of 247). There are 28 indicators related to the ecological dimension of sustainable development while additional 12 indicators are in the process of approval. The Statistical Office maintains the open data portal ([link](#)) for SDG monitoring. **However, still, more than 50% of indicators are not available.** **Better coordination among national authorities** is the key precondition for improvement in this regard.

The consultation process showed that **local governments play an important role** in the implementation of the SDGs and progress towards a healthier planet. The participants in the process, therefore, emphasized the need **to strengthen vertical cooperation** (between municipalities and national authorities) and support monitoring the progress achieved at local level.

Another important element needed for tracking the progress is **more transparency, and improved data availability and sharing**.

Leadership Dialogue 2. Achieving a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic

1. What are the most promising sustainable and inclusive recovery practices currently being applied by public, private and civil society groups at individual, community, city, regional, country level? And how could we scale them up?

As well as the rest of the world, Serbia was severely impacted by the pandemic at the beginning of 2020. The business sector, particularly tourism and mobility, was impacted the most, as well as small and micro-enterprises. However, besides the legal instruments, the implementation of **voluntary agreements and international standards** should be encouraged in the business sector and actively supported by financial institutions. With the support of the Chamber of Commerce **more than 150.000 plants have been planted** in the recent period.

The signing of the Sofia, as well as the Brdo Declarations on **the Green Agenda, represents a solid basis for recovery**. They offer a great financial support for transition and recovery, but still for this support good project proposals are needed, and possibilities for combining credits and grants as well as for blending financial support from various sources (public, private and donors).

The **Circular Economy Roadmap is adopted in 2020**, while the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan and new Energy Strategy are under preparation. These documents will create a **framework for green recovery and facilitate the generation of new green jobs**. Introducing of the circular economy principles should support the development of the market for secondary raw materials.

2. What recovery and pre-existing practises need to be changed to ensure an inclusive and sustainable recovery?

Improving waste management is one of the priorities for the Republic of Serbia. The pandemic exacerbated the situation in this area particularly related to **increasing in medical waste** causing deterioration of water quality in Serbia. Apart from this, the pandemic caused an **increase in the use of chemicals and therefore increased generation of communal waste** in form of packaging.

To ensure an inclusive and sustainable recovery, Serbia is facing the challenge of **decoupling the stability in the energy supply and protecting the environment and just transition**. With 70% of electricity produced from coal, the green transition will represent a huge challenge. **Therefore, electricity production, as well as relentless use of energy (low level of energy efficiency) represent another pre-existing practise that should be abandoned**. A greater share of energy from renewable and green sources in the energy mix is another precondition for a sustainable recovery in Serbia. However, particular attention should be on the **clear delineation between “green” and “renewable” energy**, since not all renewable energy projects are 100% green and without negative environmental impact (solar panels contain lead, batteries for electric vehicles, also).

3. How do we ensure that all countries/communities can benefit from opportunities stemming from a sustainable and just transition?

It is of paramount importance to **integrate SDGs in all strategic documents** at all levels. **Proper and full enforcement of the legal framework** is another key precondition for a sustainable and just transition. The Ministry of Environmental Protection will soon prepare a new **Environmental Protection Strategy – Green Agenda by 2030 with Action Plan**. This document together with the recently adopted Nature Protection Plan, Waste Management Programme, new Law on Climate Change, as well as the documents under preparation, the Low-carbon Development Strategy and Climate Adaptation Programme, is designed to support sustainable transition in line with the European Green Deal.

Strengthening capacities for enforcement as well as financial and technical support from the international community are also indispensable in these endeavours.

A comprehensive National Development Strategy with an overview of what can be done at local, national and regional levels could be a useful tool for the upcoming period, while the focus should be on **achieving existing targets**.

Besides all these, **active engagement at local level is also important for the prosperity of all**. There are many positive examples at local self-government levels in the area of waste management (municipality of Čajetina), climate adaptation (Bečej), wastewater treatment facility (Kruševac), and many others. Therefore, **replication of best practice examples, innovations, more effective adaptation policies and sharing knowledge are key priorities**.

4. How can we create better-performing industries and supply chains for a just transition to more sustainable economies? which sectors are most critical?

The **Circular Economy Roadmap**, adopted in 2020 recognizes four key sectors: i) production industry ii) agriculture iii) food and plastic waste and iv) construction industry. The Circular Economy Development Programme in the Republic of Serbia 2022-2024, prepared by the MoEP recognizes the role of business sectors and offers recommendations on how to improve supply chains for a just transition. **Reducing demand for resources, developing a market for secondary raw materials and improving waste management are key priorities for improving sustainability in Serbia**.

To improve industrial development a **better institutional framework for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda**, and **better cooperation among relevant authorities** are needed. It would be also recommended to develop a National Development Plan, while the Stockholm+50 initiative is a great opportunity for dialogue in this regard.

Youth: **Broader use of digitalization** (both in industry and education) as a key enabler for green transformation, **innovation and data sharing**, but also **creation of new - green jobs, penalties for big industrial polluters and reducing the trend of consumerism**.

5. What are some of the commitments and “responsible” principles that need to be made by key industry sectors and by finance and investment institutions?

Besides legal obligations, the industry sector should be proactive and accept **different voluntary agreements and international standards** that support sustainable development, resource efficiency and **transition from linear to circular business models**. Requirements for green procurement at all levels and in all sectors, particularly in the public sector that has enormous potential should be defined and integrated. Reducing greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions and environmental footprint, and improving waste management (including waste separation, reuse and recycling) should become a regular practice for all actors in the industry sector. Circular economy principles, such as requirements to reduce the use of resources and eco-design requirements should be integrated into business models of all business actors.

Participation in various regional and global initiatives such as **European Climate Pact**, where companies can make a pledge related to sustainable development.

Finance and investment institutions need a **more predictable investment environment** with reduced risks. While financial models such as combining grants and credits should be facilitated. Despite a good availability of financial sources to support sustainable development and a green transition, still, there is a room for improving quality of project proposals and absorption capacities.

Youth: **Subsidies for small and medium enterprises**, while industry could organize education and training and **support generation of green jobs**.

6. What are the decent green jobs of the future? What are the new skills needed, what is needed from business? from government? from academia?

The role of the **Government is to create a framework** and stimulate the creation of new green jobs. Serbia needs a new regulatory and strategic framework for the development of green jobs. The new Law on Energy Efficiency and Rational Use of Energy and the Law on the Use of Renewable Energy Sources are adopted, as well as amendments to the Law on Energy and Law on Mining and Geological Researches. The Ministry of Mining and Energy is preparing the Energy Strategy. These legal acts (besides many others) will determine the framework and enable creation of new green jobs.

The academic community should be flexible and adjustable to the new circumstances and needs, and able to respond to the growing demand for education in the green areas. While business sector should play a key role in adapting to the new labour market needs and stimulate its development.

Strengthened cooperation among the educational sector and the ministry of Education with all other relevant national and other authorities is needed to ensure **long-term planning for labour needs**. The civil society sector also has a role to play in the development of adequate framework for green jobs.

Leadership Dialogue 3. Accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

1. What are the biggest challenges we are facing in implementing the commitments to the 2030 Agenda and other environmental commitments (MEAs)? How do we create an enabling environment for delivery on the ground?

One of the biggest challenges is the **decarbonisation of the energy sector** following principles of leaving no one behind and just energy transition, particularly having in mind that 70% of electricity production is from coal. Another challenge is **nature degradation and biodiversity threats** that need to be urgently addressed through adequate policy and legal framework including the adoption of a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

As repeated several times during the consultations, **relatively weak enforcement of the existing** (and well developed) **legal framework**. To confirm this, a survey conducted in 2019 within the Decade of Action showed that 92% of respondents think that besides a lot of talks, real and concrete actions are needed.

GHG emissions reduction is another challenge that Serbia is facing. Therefore, Serbia should adopt the **revised Nationally Determined Contribution** to fulfil the requirements of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Establishing a **stable and sustainable system for financing environmental protection**, together with **increasing absorption capacities** and strengthening **capacities for preparation of good quality projects** is another challenge that should be adequately addressed.

Cooperation among authorities at all levels and the development of an adequate institutional framework for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In **addition to this, information exchange, public availability, and flow among institutions need to be significantly improved.**

2. What are the good practices and pathways that you would like to see scaled up to accelerate the implementation of the environmental dimension of Sustainable Development in the context, of the Decade of Action?

Municipalities are responsible for 65% of the SDGs implementation, while the survey conducted during the consultation process showed that the participants are not aware of the significant role municipalities play (annex 4). There are many positive examples that should be replicated. The participants heard the example of the City of Užice, where in the last **20 years all coal-fired district heating boilers are replaced with gas boilers**, enabling on this way to overcome the problem of extremely high air pollution. Still, there is a huge contribution of individual fireboxes to air pollution in the city. Another good example, in the area of waste management and wastewater treatment, is the City of Subotica which does not have a river and therefore was facing challenges in relation to the disposal of wastewater. The City of Subotica decided to build up an **installation for biological purification of wastewater** and ensured the filling of Paličko lake with biologically acceptable water. The municipality of Priboj also improved the district heating system which was based on more than **40 years old fuel-oil-fired boilers, and with a poorly maintained heating pipeline with leakages and huge heat energy losses**. As of 2015, all these systems are replaced due to economic, environmental but also social reasons. **Boilers are replaced with pellet fired heaters**, while supply with pellet is provided from local sources. The city of Kragujevac presented the **Local Low-carbon Development Strategy**, as a local contribution to fighting climate change. In addition to this, the city developed its **own energy management system with a dedicated information system** which enables well-informed decision making. Particular attention is directed towards actions in residential buildings and the mobility sector in the city, which are responsible for more than 90% of the energy consumption.

3. How to transform governance and legal systems that maintain long-term economic stability and ecological and social wellbeing for all?

The governance system should be improved by **strengthening the institutional framework**, and **building capacities** in national and local authorities, particularly **for the implementation of the relevant legislative framework**. This should enable long-term stability, and by introducing a system of incentives and penalties, the enforcement of environmental legislation and the protection of nature should be improved. Also, there is a **lack of reliable information on the status of the environment or at least a lack of trust in the media**. This is something that should be addressed and improved in the future to enable well-informed actions. The status and protection of whistleblowers and those who report misconduct in the area of environmental protection should also be improved.

4. What measures are needed to align public, private and development finance with existing commitments and priorities?

New financial mechanisms and combining of credits and grants are needed to support the financing of existing commitments and priorities in the environment protection area. Another precondition is the reduction of investment risks. The main challenge for potential investors and citizens is not a lack of financial sources, but sometimes **it is a lack of predictability and trust in institutions and systems**. Purposeful use of funds and increased transparency in the spending of public sources should increase trust and motivation to financially support environmental protection in Serbia. The establishment of the **Green Fund** similar to existing funds in European countries was mentioned, and which should function based on the polluter-pays principle, while the funds collected will be used for reparation of damage to nature.

5. What type of partnerships from the UN and beyond are needed to accelerate a green and sustainable economic transformation that leaves no one behind?

UN agencies as well as other international partners can strengthen the existing **technical assistance for green and just transition as well as financial support**. They can support relevant processes and implement projects (such as the “EU for Green Agenda in Serbia” and similar), support **building necessary capacities** and establish an **inclusive dialogue among various stakeholders** in policy creation and decision-making processes. They should also support activities of the Government related to the implementation of the **commitments under the UNFCCC, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), achievement of the SDGs**, and other UN driven global processes. In addition, partner organizations could support relevant national authorities in the EU accession processes and alignment with the *acquis Communautaire* and hence with the most recent Green Deal framework. The support can also be directed to **strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation** as well as cooperation among municipal and government levels.

6. What capacities and technologies are needed to improve human wellbeing in harmony with nature, including digital technologies?

Research and innovation should be heavily supported financially but also through development a favorable environment for researching in new technologies focusing on renewable energies, batteries, energy saving technologies, alternative mobility solutions, fast charging stations, agriculture (control of humidity, irrigation, temperature), lighting, utilities, etc.

Capacities of educational system to educate people (primary education and retraining) for new green jobs that will be needed in the future and ecological engineers ready for the upcoming challenges, has to be significantly improved.

The use of digital technologies as a key enabler of the green transition should be maximized for **development of a connected world** designed to monitor the status of various ecological parameters and to enable management of environmental protection, through greater deployment of eco-friendly solutions, various applications and other technologies with the least possible negative impact on the environment.

Country-specific agenda of the national consultation

A summary of the discussions relevant to country-specific themes including links to NDCs, NAPS, NBSAPS, and other national/sectoral frameworks: challenges, opportunities, solutions, recommendations.

Nationally Determined Contribution

In the last decade, Serbia significantly improved its legal framework in relation to environmental and climate protection. Besides 23 laws and 200 bylaws adopted, the Government prepared many other relevant documents to be adopted by the new Government once established (the Government is presently in technical mandate). One of these laws that represented a milestone in addressing climate change is the Law on Climate Change adopted in 2021. In addition to this, the new Law on Energy Efficiency and Rational Use of Energy and the Law on the Use of Renewable Energy Sources are adopted, as well as amendments to the Law on Energy and Law on Mining and Geological Researches. All these legal acts are contributing to the creation of a favorable environment for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

As non-Annex 1 Party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Serbia determined its national contribution to the global GHG emission reduction in accordance with its national circumstances and development goals and in line with the average trend of mean annual temperature growth of 0,3°C per decade (as observed in the period 1960-2012). Therefore, the **objective is to reduce GHG emissions by 9,8% by 2030** compared to the base year (1990). In this, although obsolete document, Serbia recognized agriculture, hydrology, forestry, biodiversity and human health as the most impacted sectors/areas by climate change. The Ministry of Environmental Protection prepared a new **revised Nationally Determined Contribution** for the reduction of GHG emissions, according to which the energy sector will play a crucial role. This revised NDC as well as the Third National Communication are the result of scientific research and findings and greater involvement of the scientific community. Serbia prepared the third National Communication with the inventory of GHG emissions for the period 2010-2018, and scenarios for climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

Serbia also has to exploit opportunities for greater involvement of Nature-based solutions in processes of addressing climate change (both, mitigation and adaptation activities). In addition to this alignment with the most recent EU package “Fit for 55%” under the European Green Deal, should take place as soon as possible, as foreseen by the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

In February 2011 the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Biodiversity Strategy for the period 2011-2018. Taking into account that this strategic document expired, Serbia’s needs to adopt a new strategy with Action Plan which will be aligned with the most recent EU framework determined by the European Green Deal i.e. with the EU Biodiversity Strategy adopted in May 2020. According to this new EU framework, Serbia has to protect 30% of its territory and ensure strict protection of 10% of the territory. As discussed during the consultation process, the present rate of the protected area is only 8%. In addition to this, as suggested during the dialogue with civil society organizations, a detailed revision of the existing legal framework is recommended including the Environmental Protection Law in order to improve the management of the environment. Ecosystem services should be regulated by improved legal framework while biodiversity objectives should be mainstreamed in other policy areas.

What were the priorities, needs, key messages and solutions raised by women, youth, indigenous peoples, local communities, people with disabilities, and other stakeholder groups under vulnerable conditions or marginalized?

Priorities: Common priorities for women, youth, indigenous people, local communities, and other vulnerable groups are more-less the same as for all other participants. They all recognize the urgent need to address climate change and improve the protection of the environment. During the consultation process, many representatives of these groups (formal or informal) stressed the **importance of education in the areas of environmental protection and climate action**. In order to properly address these issues, the Republic of Serbia's priority is to improve and adapt the educational system to new circumstances and market needs (green jobs), as well as to improve information exchange system and enhance transparency and availability of data. This is discussed during the dialogue organized for youth. Also, the citizens should be better informed about the status of the environment, where the role of national and other media is very important, and where there is a room for improvement.

Needs: All representatives of various groups presented during the consultation process unanimously underlined the **need to be more involved in the policy-making processes**. All of them presented readiness to engage (even voluntarily) and to contribute in their capacities to the important national processes. Another need recognized during the process is a **recommendation to act more resolutely instead of promoting new targets**.

Key messages: The representatives of vulnerable groups, as well as all other participants, are concerned with the state of the planet since the fight for environmental protection is also the fight for equality. The poor, youth and other vulnerable groups are usually most impacted by climate and environmental degradation impacted events (floods, heatwaves, hail, etc...). They are ready to learn, obtain new skills, volunteer, be more engaged and provide their time and energy in supporting policy-making processes. Youth recognize a huge potential in **circular economy, innovation and the use of digital technologies**, particularly social media and podcasts, which could help in disseminating reliable information and increasing the level of knowledge about relevant topics. All participants called for inclusiveness and permanent dialogue that will not end with the Stockholm+50 exercise. Representatives of the civil sector underlined the need for more stringent enforcement of the legal framework and strengthening inspection controls and surveillance under the attitude towards the environment and nature. The "polluter pays" principle should be improved, although the collection of funds is relatively good, purposeful spending of funds should be improved and money collected should be invested in remediation measures for the harm to the environment.

A survey for youth conducted using the "U-Report" platform (821 respondents) and which is attached to this report, showed that young people are ready to change their lifestyle and habits to contribute to a healthier planet (92 %) and believe that (86% of them) the state should also contribute to this process. They stressed the need to stimulate circular economy, protect and restore nature and ecosystems, as the two activities that will provide the quickest benefits to the process, and stressed the need to invest in waste management, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.

Solutions: The **improved education system** and information sharing. **Permanent inclusive dialogue**. **Cross-sectoral cooperation**. Greater **involvement of the scientific community**. **Involvement of health experts** in policy-making processes. **Mainstreaming environment, climate, and biodiversity requirements** into other policy areas. **Improved data availability** and sharing of scientific research and findings. Enhanced **cooperation at municipal level**. **Subsidies for clean and green technologies** with clear delineation between renewable and environmentally neutral technologies. Greater attention to **the environmental impact of each technology and solution**. Introducing an effective **penalty system** for those who create damage to the environment and harm nature. Increased **human capacities** at national and local levels.

How did various stakeholder groups in your country express their expectations from the Stockholm+50 international meeting? What changes do they expect in the international environmental cooperation, policies, and investment frameworks as a follow up to the Stockholm+50? How do they think that Stockholm+50 can help your country better position itself for advancing integrated solutions across national climate, biodiversity, green recovery, sectoral, and SDG policy frameworks?

Stakeholders that participated in the National consultation process in Serbia, expect their **voices to be heard**, integrated into the National report and therefore presented to the Stockholm meeting hoping to contribute in this way to create a joint global long-term vision for a healthier planet and prosperity. They were all eager to share their knowledge, views and ideas, and to invest their energy and dedicate certain time, in order to support the global process. The expectations from the Stockholm+50 event are huge. The participants expect guidance, new ideas, and innovative approaches but also clear objectives and requirements for all global actors. These requirements have to be designed and adjusted to national circumstances but they also have to be ambitious taking into account the proximity of the 2030 horizon for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as other objectives such as the biodiversity targets for 2030, Green Agenda Action Plan by 2030, energy and climate targets for 2030 and many others.

Highlights from the online SparkBlue Consultations

Summarize the key types of comments, recommendations and findings relevant to the Stockholm+50 Leadership Dialogues themes.

Leadership Dialogue 1. Reflecting on the urgent need for actions to achieve a healthy planet and prosperity of all

- One of the ways of achieving a healthy planet is, of course, **the promotion of healthy lifestyles, such as bicycling**, following some of the well-known examples from the world (such as Lisbon). The broader deployment of bicycles for commuting and travelling is based on 4 pillars: i) Infrastructure for bicycles (network of bike lines); ii) dedicated parking slots, particularly in front of big centres and administration buildings; iii) financial support/subsidies (from local or other authorities) iv) behavioural changes.

- Some of the recommendations from the SparkBlue platform would be:

- Raising knowledge and awareness on food waste reduction;
- Introducing a system of waste separation for food and biodegradable waste;
- Supporting the development of composting systems for food and other biodegradable waste;
- Subsidies for purchasing energy-efficient products (A class products, according to the energy labelling framework);
- Preparation of a law for food waste management (based on some good examples, such as France);
- More stringent inspections and control of commercial facilities regarding the proper disposal of food waste;

- **Plastic litter in Serbia also represent a challenging issue**, since the EU Directive on single-use plastic has not been transposed yet, into the national legal framework. According to the report published by the Environmental Protection Agency (Waste Management 2011-2019), 13% of communal waste represents plastic waste, which makes it 325.000 tons that ended up in landfills. Therefore, some of the recommendations from the SparkBlue platform, would be:

- An urgent establishment of a deposit system for PET packaging;
- Introducing a complete ban on the use of oxo-biodegradable bags;
- Preparation and adoption of a program for abandoning single-use plastics.

Leadership Dialogue 2. Achieving a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic

- To address the climate threats, the World Health Organization launched the initiative: “**Environmentally Sustainable Health Systems**”, also having in mind the big increase in the need for medical centres during the pandemic. The objective of this initiative is to improve performances of buildings in healthcare systems and decrease the climate footprint through monitoring various indicators in these buildings such as electricity consumption, other types of energy used, waste treatment, wastewater disposal, the use of renewable energy sources, etc.
- There is a need to ensure **greater involvement of health experts in drafting public policies**, laws and decisions related to environmental protection and climate change. This is particularly important having in mind the harmful impact of air pollution on health, which also causes increased costs for medical treatment and therefore, often represents a heavy burden to the economy.
- In 2018 the Government adopted the Public Health Strategy 2018-2026 which covers environmental protection and reduction of environmental risks in the context of human health, among the other topics. **The Strategy foresees the reduction of emission of harmful gasses from industry, transport and heating systems by 20%.** Based on it, the Law on Public Health has also been adopted.

Leadership Dialogue 3. Accelerating the implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

- There should be a **continual public debate** like this one in the preparation for the Stockholm event. Such public debate should facilitate finding adequate solutions to addressing environmental and climate challenges in Serbia.
- **Afforestation is key to combating climate change** and the first National Program for Adaptation to Climate Change (draft 2015), recognizes forests and their role as a preventive measure for climate change. Besides the role of forests in the mitigation of climate change they also have an important protective function. However, the coverage of the country by forests is not at the desired level. Presently, Serbia has only 29,1 % while the optimal rate should be 41,4 % according to the National Forest Inventory from 2009.
- Having in mind the important role of forests, Serbia should exploit its potential for green infrastructure, and establish a system of forest protection zones to decrease risks in agriculture, water management, transport infrastructure (road and rail), nature, tourism and other sectors. Forest protection belts play an important role in protecting arable land from erosion, protecting the road and railway infrastructure from snow and wind, protecting settlements from wind-borne pollutants, as visual barriers for municipal landfills, protecting water surfaces, enabling and supporting beekeeping, enabling the production of biomass for energy purposes, and also represent a place for sport and recreation... **Therefore, particular attention in the development strategies and plans should be given to afforestation in the context of the Decade of Action.**

4. Consultation Follow-up, Next Steps and Links to National Policies

Possible follow-up and next steps including the design and implementation of socially inclusive and gender-responsive national and sectoral policies, NDCs, NBSAPs, INFFs, SDG Strategies, Green/Blue Economy and Green Recovery Plans, etc..

The national consultation process revealed **unanimity on the importance of protecting the planet and improving the status of nature**. Regardless of gender, age, sector or any other affiliation, all participants shared the same understanding of the status and potential climate and environmental risks. In addition, the consultations showed the readiness of all stakeholders to learn, actively engage and provide their own contributions to improving the health of the planet. The process also showed **greater participation of women** than men (2/3 of the participants were women, and a very similar ratio was among panelists in all consultation sessions).

Besides women, the **National consultations process in Serbia paid particular attention to youth**. Therefore, youth was the second-ranked group in terms of the number of representatives (just after the Government representatives), and not only this, through a dedicated event youth actively participated in the three parallel workshops where they had the opportunity to discuss with their peers on the three burning topics defined by the three Leadership Dialogues. Representatives of young persons touched upon many key themes and showed a high level of awareness and general information about them. They also asked for greater involvement in policy-making processes in the future.

Representatives of **the business sector, as well as representatives from local self-governments, had also an important role to play during the process**. Both groups presented some best practice examples and expressed readiness to get more involved in the future in policy-making processes, knowledge sharing exercises and in other concrete actions directed towards protecting the environment and implementing various measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Having in mind the great role municipalities are playing in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (65%, as confirmed during the consultations), there is a need to ensure their constant and active involvement through a vertical feedback mechanism and strengthen their cooperation with the Government. In terms of business, particular attention was dedicated to circular business models and the transition from linear take-make-use-dispose to circular approaches.

Having all these in mind, it should be **recommended to find a model and maintain a continuous and inclusive dialogue on sustainable development in the future**. This dialogue should ensure that the voice of each group is not only heard but also that it is taken into account and possibly integrated into the strategic and legal framework.

All groups also expressed the need for better information sharing, increasing transparency and availability of data and readiness to learn and take more concrete measures. In this context, **a framework which will support the greater involvement of all relevant stakeholders and inclusiveness** will be more than welcome.

How has coordination with other national/subnational processes benefited/been improved?

There are many initiatives at the national and local level that are complementary to this national consultation process, that, therefore, benefited from raising awareness and knowledge as well as from the intensive promotional campaign on the importance of environmental protection and whose implementation will be accelerated in the context of the urgent need to implement the environmental dimension of sustainable development. Through this whole-of-government and whole-of-society process institutions, various groups and individuals recognized the need to speed up the processes of protection of the planet and properly address the climate and nature challenges. During the process of national consultations, it is reiterated that the process of adoption of the new, revised **Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)** should be accelerated. Also, the implementation of the “**EU for Green Agenda in Serbia**” project got on its importance. Scarce arable land is recognized as a limited resource, while there is a need for additional measures and **transformation of the agriculture sector**. The **evident biodiversity loss** and the need to increase the restoration rate, also call for urgent action. **Planning and preparation of planning documents** are another issue where certain improvements are expected and should be initiated by the Stockholm process.

How will stakeholder dialogue on these topics be maintained and continued? What platforms or mechanisms are in place for stakeholders to provide their feedback and follow up recommendations, including the use of virtual dialogues and digital technologies?

After the Stockholm event, the SparkBlue platform for cooperative engagement will remain to be operational till 20th June to facilitate the dissemination of conclusions, key ideas and other outcomes of the Stockholm+50 meeting. However, this short period will not be enough for a long-term engagement of various stakeholders, as per the expressed interest during the consultation process. In cooperation with the Government and other national and local authorities (agencies, statistical offices, local communities, institutes...) various international organizations and partners, should **consider opportunities of establishing a dialogue for a broader and continuous stakeholders’ engagement at all levels**. The use of **digital technologies should be particularly explored and maximized** in order to ensure maximal outreach, but also to enable broad stakeholders’ participation under minimal costs and environmental footprint (through avoiding travelling, printing material, etc.). However, if there is a concern about the ratio of digitally literate people and those who are not, adequate information material or other options alternatively should be provided. **The potential of social media for sharing information, obtaining opinions or conducting surveys is mentioned during the dialogue with youth** confirming in this way the huge reliance of young generations on social media. In addition to this, the consultation process included the so-called “U-report” (attached to this report as Annex 8), a specifically dedicated survey that youth participated in and that could be used/repeated in the future for similar purposes.

What other initiatives have been triggered/inspired/informed by the National Consultation?

The national consultation process generated many interesting ideas at various levels. Of course, youth confirmed their creativity by the quick development of myriad ideas, such as the broader use of social media and podcasts for dissemination of information, bio-design and replacement of textile with roots-based clothing. Digitalization and the creation of new green jobs are recognized as key drivers of sustainable development on a global level. It is stunning that youth are well informed about and understand the concept of nature-based solutions and its potentials.

In addition to this, one of the proposals heard at the first meeting was to support the development of a comprehensive strategy for overall development which should pave the way for the transformation of the economy and society in Serbia through a strategic approach and inclusive planning.

5. Annexes

- Annex 1a - Agenda S+50 - Start of National Consultations (Serbian and English)
- Annex 1b – Agenda S+50 - Environment and Health (Serbian and English)
- Annex 1c – Agenda S+50 - Dialogue for Youth (Serbian and English)
- Annex 1d – Agenda S+50 - Dialogue for CSOs (Serbian and English)
- Annex 1e – Agenda S+50 - Closing Event (Serbian and English)
- Annex 2a – List of Participants - Start of National Consultations
- Annex 2b - List of Participants - Environment and Health
- Annex 2c – List of Participants - Dialogue for Youth
- Annex 2d – List of Participants - Dialogue for CSOs
- Annex 2e – List of Participants – Closing Event
- Annex 3a – Minutes of the Meeting - Start of National Consultations (Serbian)
- Annex 3b – Minutes of the Meeting - Environment and Health (Serbian)
- Annex 3c – Minutes of the Meeting - Dialogue for Youth (Serbian)
- Annex 3d – Minutes of the Meeting - Dialogue for CSOs (Serbian)
- Annex 3e – Minutes of the Meeting - Closing Event (Serbian)
- Annex 4 – Mentimeter Survey and results - Start of National Consultations
- Annex 5 – PowerPoint Presentation - Start of National Consultations (one example)
- Annex 6 – Links for photos and videos
- Annex 7 – Summary of traditional and social media coverage with links
- Annex 8 - U-Report on Environmental Protection for Youth (Serbian and English)

6. Abbreviations

CBD	- (UN) Convention on biological diversity
EU	- European Union
GHG	- Greenhouse gases
MoEP	- Ministry of Environmental Protection
NbS	- Nature-based Solutions
NBSAP	- National Biodiversity Strategy with Action Plan
NDC	- Nationally Determined Contribution
NGO	- Non-governmental organization
SDG	- Sustainable development goal
UN	- United Nations
UNDP	- United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	- United Nations Children's Fund