

## ***BALKAN ENVIRONMENT CENTER***

### ***Serving “entrepreneurship” and the public***

**History** The need for integrated management of both transboundary watersheds and natural resources within the context of sustainable development, through innovative applications and more effective governance was the catalyst for establishing the Balkan Environment Center (BEC) in 2007 as a flexible non-profit organization focused on international action.

**Partners** The vision was conceived and implemented through funds from INTERREG III / A, INTERREG III / B: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Research Committee), the Regional Development Fund of Central Macedonia and the Municipality of Lagkada, where the headquarters of the Center is located. Since its founding, the partnership has expanded to include: Decentralized Administration of Macedonia-Thrace, Decentralized Administration of Peloponnese and Western Greece and the Ionian, Aegean Decentralised Administration, Regional Development Fund of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Regional Development Fund of Western Macedonia, Municipality of Echedoros (now Municipality of Delta) and Municipality of Oreokastro.

This partnership emphasizes meaningful cooperation among all levels of public administration and research institutions.

**Objectives** The Balkan Environment Center aims to promote:

- rational management of natural resources,
- sustainable development,
- improving operational efficiency of the decision-making mechanisms,
- green entrepreneurship within the context of transnational river basins and to enhancing competitiveness of the private sector,
- integrated intersectional solutions, especially green development, management and protection of natural resources, and
- new job opportunities and development of new products and services.

**Innovation** The Center integrates the public sector with the research community at national and international levels. It facilitates transfer of knowledge to end users, enhances intersectoral and interregional cooperation and the facilitation of consultation processes between institutional and non-institutional stakeholders, for the benefit of society and the general public. This innovation brings mutual benefits to all partners (win-win situation) with positive results in social, economic and environmental sectors.

**Areas of action** In order to achieve the above at an optimal level and by utilizing co-financed European projects, the BEC has implemented a new model consisting of three lines of action:

#### **I. Investing in the environment**

- Use of innovative technologies for environmental monitoring and natural resources assessment:
  - unmanned aerial and floating vehicles,
  - satellite remote sensing
  - telemetric network of 109 qualitative, quantitative and meteorological stations in transboundary basins of Greece.
- Development of reliable standards and quality assurance in environmental monitoring and management of natural resources:
  - Innovative multilevel monitoring systems integrating unmanned aerial vehicles, telemetry, surveillance and telescopic methods
  - Interdisciplinary approaches of the Center and potential contributions to academic and research communities in Greece and abroad to solve complex problems of environmental monitoring and management
- Development and implementation of innovative actions for servicing the operational needs of the public and private sectors:
  - optimal use of digital infrastructure / cloud computing - server consolidation,
  - digital online decision support systems and early warning systems
  - operational management models.
- Scientific support for the public sector to provide services to society through Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):
  - supplying environmental data and indicators to the relevant bodies and the public in real time with graded access through the aforementioned online digital systems.
- Multiplication of knowledge and acceleration of entrepreneurial initiatives.

## **II. Governance and sustainable development**

- Business applications and expertise through the interface and knowledge transfer from the researchers to Producer Organizations (POs) and end users.
- Consultation and intermediation between the control mechanism and end users for sustainable development.
- Aggregation and clustering of end users-entrepreneurs to develop sustainable businesses based on innovation and smart specialization.
- Participation in the network agencies and support with environmental data in real time including the Division of Planning and Emergency Response of the Ministry of Citizen Protection through issuance of daily bulletins for predicting fire risk.
- Creation of protocols for rational use of natural resources to support green business and socioeconomic development:
  - alternative energy
  - reduced input agricultural practices

## **III. Networking at transboundary and interregional level to implement integrated solutions at the river basins**

- Establishment of a European Interregional Network of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)
- Application of innovative technologies and implementation of projects in Balkan countries.
- Development of international cooperation networks for sharing expertise within and outside the European Union.
- Focal point for monitoring fires in the Balkans (Creation of a Fire Monitoring Center).

- Adapting and implementing new technologies that are already successful.

### Services

Within the three axes of operation, the BEC currently provides comprehensive and reliable services to decision-making mechanisms and the private sector, which includes:

- ✓ Design and implementation of methods/instruments of governance and mediation among bodies of the public and private sector,
- ✓ Environmental monitoring with innovative and certified methods,
- ✓ Management-interpretation of environmental data by an interdisciplinary team and scientific support of planning and decision making,
- ✓ Development, implementation and specialization of innovative tools in synergy with the private sector in green entrepreneurship,
- ✓ Creating networks of cooperation and transfer of knowledge from research institutions to end users at regional, national and international level,
- ✓ Development of protocols for production optimization processes related to utilization of natural resources and entrepreneurship, and
- ✓ Development of digital applications for natural resource management.

### Quality assurance

All services adhere to stringent quality control procedures. The Center has approved internal procedures in line with the Management Adequacy Type B (Prot.numb. 180078/12-01-2011) from EPERRA, and the Analytical Laboratory of BEC is accredited by the National Accreditation Board (N.AC.B) in accordance with ISO 17025:2005 (Certificate No. 720).

### Perspective

The Balkan Environment Center, as an institution of scientific support for institutional stakeholders and private sectors, is a pioneer for providing solutions for current global challenges in the management of environment and natural resources, in addition to need for integrated solutions of green growth.

Thus, through an international network of collaboration interdisciplinary approaches and provision of valid services and integrated solutions (one stop shop) to the public, governance mechanisms and the private sector, the Center plays a key and aggregated role in environmental protection and socio-economic development.