

## CHALLENGES FACING KOSOVO

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Kosovo/a is a landlocked territory in the center of the Balkan Peninsula. According to the Statistical Office of Kosovo it has a surface area of 10,877 km<sup>2</sup> (a little larger than Corsica), while population estimates range from 1.9 to 2.4 million (The latter is OSCE's 2001 estimate). Kosovo's population is mainly rural, though the last decade has seen dramatic migration towards urban areas (about 35 percent of the population can be considered urban). Decades-long uncontrolled use of natural and mineral resources, industrial production coupled with high levels of pollution, as well as a lack of appropriate policies, laws and relevant institutions to deal with and solve these problems has resulted in a visibly degraded environment, which in some cases cannot even be rehabilitated. This has a direct negative impact on the health of the population. According to the Kosovo Environmental Action Plan and its 2008 State of the Environment Report, among the major urban environmental challenges in Kosovo/a are the following:



### *Industrial pollution*

Mitrovica (in the north) and its surrounding region hosts the most important pollution sources in Kosovo. It is the site of one of the largest lead mining, smelting, refining in Europe. A battery plant complex can be found in the east of Kosovo at Gjiilan/Gnjilane. Emissions of lead, cadmium, zinc, copper, and toxic gases (sulphur dioxide, sulphur trioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, etc) are a serious health risk. As Case Study 25 in the *Public Participation* module shows, the region of Obiliq/Obilic (surrounding Mitrovica) meanwhile hosts two large thermal power plants close to surface lignite deposits. Both are poorly maintained. "Kosovo B's" filters have a removal capacity of 98 percent, while the removal rates of "Kosovo A's" filters are between 50 – 80 percent. One of the 200 MW units emits about 25 tones of dust and ash per hour, 74 times in excess of European standards. Other emissions include CO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, and NO<sub>x</sub>. Precise levels are not measured although data from 1988 shows 47,300 tons/year of SO<sub>2</sub> and 78,600 tons/year of dust. Emissions of SO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> may be lower today because the plants work at lower capacity, while dust emissions may be higher owing to the poorly functioning filters at Kosovo A. This leads to a higher risk of upper and lower respiratory tract diseases including infections and allergies.

### *Wastewater treatment*

Water quality in the lowland rivers (e.g. Sitnica which crosses central Kosovo) is very poor owing to a lack of waste-water treatment and waste disposal. Some rivers downstream of larger municipalities and industries (such as Gjiilan in eastern Kosovo and which is featured in Case Study 13 in the *Lobbying* module, Mitrovica and Lipjan) are so heavily polluted that the water cannot be used for water supply or irrigation. Only 28 percent of homes are connected to a sewage system, while there is no wastewater treatment. In villages and other small settlements, wastewater is disposed in open channels, which contaminate surface and groundwaters, resulting in poor-quality drinking water from wells. As a result, there is a high incidence of water-borne diseases. An estimated 167,000 m<sup>3</sup> (or tons) of raw (sanitary) sewage is produced in Kosovo (50,000 m<sup>3</sup> (or tons) in Prishtina/Pristina alone). Industrial wastewater is not treated either, and the effluent is discharged directly into the country's rivers. Recent chemical and bacteriological monitoring show that the majority of Kosovo's rivers are polluted and may not even be used for industrial needs without prior treatment.

### *Waste Management*

Waste management is a major challenge for the whole of Kosovo, exacerbated by a disregard for legislation; poor management and disposal of urban waste; little interest in reducing the quantity and hazardousness of urban waste and/or recycling/processing. Almost all (90 percent) of Kosovo's urban population are serviced by municipal waste management companies, while organised waste collection within rural communities is at around ten percent. Donor-supported programmes (EAR, DANIDA) for the rehabilitation and closure of old municipal landfills (or dumpsites) has occurred in many locations, including Prishtina, Gjilan, Prizren, Podujevo/a, Mitrovicë/a, Sharr, Ferizan, Zveçan. However, problems remain in many of these locations due to improper treatment of leachates and/or improper sealing of the sites. Little data exists concerning the types of waste produced or recycled in Kosovo, while only minor pilot programmes for the recycling of paper, aluminum and tyres have occurred. It is estimated that the average Kosovar generates around 2 kg per day!