

## **NEW ELEMENTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

By implementing amendments into the new Law on Environmental Protection new elements have been introduced into the environmental legislation of the Republic of Serbia, which signifies another step taken towards harmonisation with EU legislation.

One of the new elements introduced by this Law is the obligation of legal entities and natural persons degrading the environment to implement rehabilitation and remediation measures according to a precisely specified plan, with the prior consent of the competent Ministry. If they fail to carry out such obligation, the Ministry itself may implement the specified measures, which will be charged to the entity or person whose obligation it was.

Regarding legal entities and entrepreneurs who are in the business of managing wastewater treatment plants or who release wastewater into recipients or the public sewerage network, apart from their obligation to hold an integrated license, the new Law specifies their additional obligation to prepare an action plan for gradually reaching threshold values for emission of pollutants into the water, and deadlines for gradually reaching such values, within six months following the effective date of the new Law. Failure to comply with the obligation to prepare an action plan and act according to such plan shall be considered a commercial offence, punishable by fines from 150,000 to 3,000,000 dinars, depending on whether the offence was committed by a legal entity or an entrepreneur.

An important innovation is also seen in the establishment of a National Electronic Database (National Meta-Register). The National Meta-Register is an electronic database, and also a portal towards the existing databases and documents containing environmental information from various bodies and organizations. By way of such public availability of data, Serbian citizens will be able to locate environmental information more quickly, and access to such information will be simplified. The instruments for processing environmental information and verifying the accuracy of submitted data shall be provided by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The measures taken by local self-government bodies for raising environmental awareness of the populace are planned to be intensified. These measures will primarily consist of supplying information on ongoing environmental projects, and regular publishing and updating of such information by way of electronic and telecommunications media.

One of the most important new elements introduced by the amendments to the Law on Environmental Protection is the establishing of the Serbian Green Fund, as a budgetary fund, the purpose of which is to finance priority projects in the domain of environmental protection. This Fund will be established by the Ministry in charge of environmental matters. This budgetary fund will be established in order to record funding intended for financing the preparation, implementation and development of programs, projects and other activities in the domain of preservation, sustainable use, protection and improvement of the environment. Funds from the Serbian Green Fund will be approved to beneficiaries for the purpose of financing environmental protection and improvement, by way of public competitions to be announced

by the Ministry. The competent Ministry will monitor, analyze and supervise the delivery of projects and use of the funding.

Environmental protection will be financed according to the "user pays" or "polluter pays" principle in accordance with responsibility, which will further contribute to the development of green industry.

Apart from the new Law on Environmental Protection, the long-planned set of other environmental and agricultural laws has also been prepared. By enacting these laws Serbia will achieve a significant advance in protection of the environment and of natural values. This will also stimulate international cooperation, which will expand opportunities for development of the agricultural and commercial sectors.

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