



URBAN SMS: STAKEHOLDER VIEW ON URBAN SOIL MANAGEMENT

Bratislava/Stuttgart, 20th May 2010 – Continuation of current land management under recent regulations in cities would lead to deterioration or loss of several soil functions. This is the common conclusion of stakeholders from Central European countries analyzing Urban Soil Management processes. A series of stakeholder meetings was a part of URBAN SMS (Soil Management Strategy) project implemented through the CENTRAL EUROPE Program co-financed by ERDF (European Regional Development Fund). Information and results of the project can also be found on the Web: www.urban-sms.eu.

Since URBAN SMS has been started in October 2008 several stakeholder meetings have already taken place in Ljubljana, Vienna, Milan, Wroclaw, Prague and Bratislava. Environmentalists (environmental protection units of local administration), spatial planners (city administration and service providers), developers, NGOs dealing with environmental protection and planning, and research institutions met to discuss the key problems of urban soil management and the importance of soil in urban environment. The uncontrolled soil sealing in the process of urbanization resulting in reduction of open space and biodiversity of urban ecosystems was identified to be one of the major problems. This process has an impact on many aspects of urban environment such as air quality, urban microclimate, flooding risk and landscape aesthetics. For all cities it was concluded that the continuation of current management under recent regulations would lead to deterioration or loss of several soil functions. Therefore, the better protection of soils and the change of regulations are required to sustain or improve the natural soil functions. Some regional differentiation was noticed in perceiving the importance of particular soil functions. The stakeholders classified various environmental, social and economic functions of soil according to their importance for the sustainable city development under the local circumstances. For example in Ljubljana, soil functions related to health issues and environmental quality were identified as the most important whereas in Wroclaw, Prague, Vienna and Bratislava the preference was given to housing and workplace provision. Hence the preservation of natural soil functions is still in serious competition with the enlargement needs of big settlement areas. The meeting in Milan revealed opposite priorities of different groups of stakeholders (environmentalists, economists, civil engineers) and, thus, confirmed that interaction of different groups of interest is required to set a sustainable plan of city development.

During all stakeholder meetings a free discussion was encouraged in order to collect information on stakeholder's opinions about the importance of soil functions and potential effects of different soil protection scenarios within the urban zones under variable conditions of different Central European cities. The limits for loss of particular soil functions were semi-quantitatively defined. Besides gathering stakeholders' opinions such interactive meetings allow to raise awareness on soil importance in urban zones. The methodology used is based on an approach developed in the SENSOR project (<http://www.sensor-ip.org>) and allows the views of different interest groups on soil protection and on the risks for degradation of soil functions to be captured and quantified.

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Soil protection is a challenging task in the urbanized areas of Europe. Therefore the sustainable management of soil in urban planning became a subject of the international project "Urban Soil Management Strategy" (URBAN SMS) implemented through the CENTRAL EUROPE Program and co-financed by ERDF (European Regional Development Fund). It started in October 2008 and lasts until March 2012. The major objective of URBAN SMS is to develop a comprehensive soil management strategy for CENTRAL EUROPEAN municipalities helping the urban planners to consider the value of soil and its different functions within the planning process. Beside of that the project should contribute to increase of the awareness on soil protection importance among the municipal authority representatives, urban planners and stakeholders involved in exploitation of land resources in cities and suburban areas.

Information about URBAN SMS in the Web:
www.urban-sms.eu



Further information:

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