



CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION



SARAJEVO ECONOMIC REGION  
DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

**9<sup>th</sup> WG2 Workshop on Military Base  
Conversion, Sarajevo, BiH  
25<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

***In cooperation with the Sarajevo Economic  
Region Development Agency***

RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation, in cooperation with Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency (SERDA) organized and conducted the 9<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Military Base Conversion from the 25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> November 2008, in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which included a field study trip to the former military base in “Hadžići”. The workshop mainly focused on the experience exchange in the field of military base conversion (MBC), targeting personnel directly involved in this field, representing local governments, banks, construction companies as well as respective international institutions.



***Workshop Participants***

The purpose of the 9<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Military Base Conversion was to provide the participants with the opportunity to share the trends, experience and lessons learned in the field of military base conversion, particularly to enable them to visit the conversion sites and get the real picture, which they considered as most useful part of the workshop.



***Regional co-operation***

The main objective of the WG2 workshop was to bring together representatives from different ministries, regional and local authorities, international organizations, NGOs, financial institutions and businesses to examine and discuss all the aspects of military base conversion (MBC). The workshop gathered fifty-three participants, twenty-one WG2 members, sixteen representatives from local governments and international institutions, and six participants from RACVIAC. The participants came from the following Southeast European countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia, with knowledge and experience in the field concerned.

**Seminar Opening**

Ambassador Nedžad Hadžimusić, RACVIAC Director, opened the workshop and expressed his deep appreciation to the proponent of the workshop, Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency (SERDA) for joining forces with RACVIAC, as well as the European Support for Regional Economic Development in B&H, Ministry of Defence of B&H and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina for

\* Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia by its constitutional name



*Steering comity*

their ongoing support to RACVIAC initiative. He also expressed his warm welcome to Lieutenant General (retired) Stergios Papotis, the former Director of RACVIAC and one of the most valuable contributors to this activity.



*Welcome address*

In his welcome speech, Director of SERDA expressed his warm welcome to all the participants, stressing the importance of such activities, mainly pointing to the cooperation formula as the key to achieving successful military base conversion process.

**Plenary session**



*Forum in the Municipality Hadžici*

During the three workshop days, a multinational team of experts shared their experience in MBC projects, provided a deeper insight into national and international donors and financial organizations involvement in the MBC projects funding and discussed the possible solutions.

The participants were provided with the opportunity to gain better understanding of different legal aspects of the military base conversion process.



*Visit to Hadžici*

The workshop possibility to visit the military base sites was appreciated as one of the most important aspects of the MBC workshop. The weather did not permit fully meeting the agenda, but the visit to the Hadžici Municipality and nine former military bases on its territory provided the participants with a clear picture of MBC situation in B&H.

**Subject matter experts**



*MBC in B&H*

With reference to the subject matter experts, all participants particularly appreciated the presentations by Mr. Salko Polimac, Advisor to

the Minister of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina for infrastructure and logistics, who gave a concise insight into the MBC situation in the country concerned, particularly emphasising all up-to-date challenges and successes.

The presentation delivered by Col Miroljub Nikolic, representing the Serbian delegation, proved to be very proactive.



*Sharing experience*

This seven-minute presentation sparked up a forty-minute interactive discussion among the participants, once again proving the importance of the MBC process, as well as the necessity to continue with the projects implementation.

Lieutenant General (ret) Stergios Papotis delivered a presentation on the past, present and future of the defence conversion with specific view on military base conversion. He also emphasised the following: “To have the military base conversion in order, patience is needed, because the redevelopment of sites does not happen overnight.



*Expert's point of view*

Military Base Conversion is, in the best of circumstances, a long and complicated process”. “Base Conversion has to be carried

out in an environment of still political and economical transformation.

Land ownership questions are still in some cases unclear. Legal and administrative frameworks necessary for base conversion have to be built, and, this have to be done as soon as possible". His expertise and knowledge as well as opinions shared proved to be one of the real backbones of this activity.

Mr. Slobodan Marković, Director of the Regional Development Agency in South-West Bosnia – Banja Luka, also made a substantial contribution to this event. His presentation covered a pilot project of a non-military object such as “Premises of old TRAPISTI”, owned by the old Orthodox Church, which was transformed into a public centre. The presentation was received with the great interest by the workshop participants.

### Conclusion

The 9th WG2 workshop confirmed that partnership approach, exchange of experience and lessons learned, as well as common support are the most valuable assets in countering MBC challenges! The overall economical crises added a heavy burden over the MBC process, although the participants are still optimistic and looking forward to the MBC project implementation.

The pilot project of the Republic of Moldova - the International Airport “Marculesty”, although unexpected proved to be a great success. The example given confirmed that a military base conversion project implementation was possible in spite of all the obstacles in its way. It also proved that local governments would have no room for hesitation when the right approach, initiatives and legislatives were in force. Such a consideration would break any possible barriers, and, is for sure the turning moment for the central authorities to offer the necessary legal bases. As for the way ahead, the biggest challenge in the MBC would be reaching a compromise between the owners and the local governments. If this issue was properly managed, than half of the problem would be solved. All other pieces would than come together through the process step by step.

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