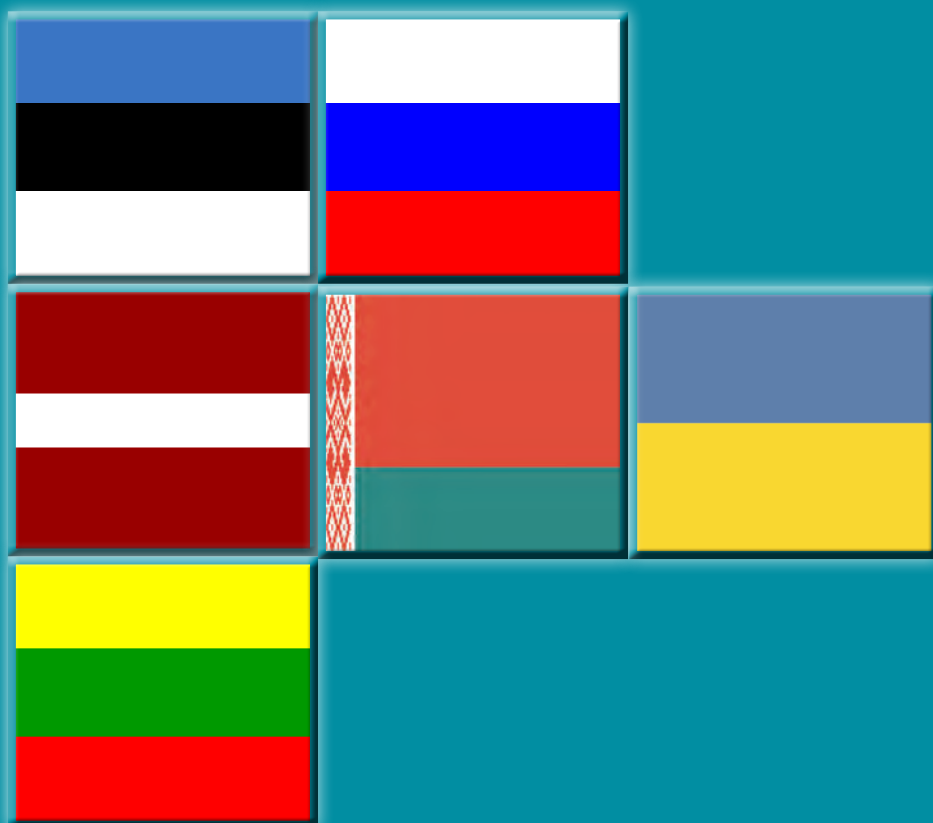


Performance of Environmental NGOs in Former Soviet Union Countries:

A Comparative Study in the Baltic States, Belarus, Russia, and the Ukraine



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A Comparative Study in the
Baltic States, Belarus, Russia, and the Ukraine

The publication was prepared by the following organisations:

Center for Transboundary Cooperation St. Petersburg (Russia)
Baltic Environmental Forum Estonia
Baltic Environmental Forum Latvia
Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania
Baltic Environmental Forum Germany
Ecoproject (Belarus)
Mama-86 (Ukraine)

This publication was prepared with financial support of:
the European Union and the
Estonian Environmental Investment Center

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The editors would like to express their thanks to Malte Busch, Matthias Grätz and Devin Judge-Lord for their support.

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The complete frequency tables of the survey are available in a separate file at www.ctcspb.ru

Note from the Editors

This publication provides a comparative insight into the everyday work, conditions and circumstances under which environmental non-governmental, non-profit organizations (NGOs) in the Baltic States, Belarus, Russia, and the Ukraine are working today. It has been prepared by insiders from NGOs in the selected countries and thus delivers information directly from “the field” to interested readers not familiar with the topic.

The authors analyse the performance of NGOs in different areas of development and implementation of environmental policy in each country in order to find out how different or similar the practices and results are, to evaluate the effectiveness of NGO-activities, and to make proposals in which directions future activities should go in an attempt to further strengthen environmental non profit organizations.

Given, that the authors were part of the object of the investigations, its results were also of great interest for them and learning about the differences and similarities and using them effectively became an essential basis for future cooperation.

The publication was prepared in 2007 within the frame of the EU-funded project “NGO potential for contribution to environmental policy development”. The information presented on the following pages is based on interviews and a survey which were developed and carried out by the project team, along with many discussions among the project team and in particular at the NGO conference «NGOs in Eastern Europe as actors in development and implementation of environmental policy» where participants from Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian jointly commented on the findings and results.

Yet, this document – which is available in electronic form and as a short summary also in hard copy – is only one output of the project, which aimed at facilitating the experience exchange between NGOs in the Baltic States, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine on contributions to environmental policy, opportunities and restrictions for lobbying, participating in the development and the implementation of environmental policies. Its major idea was to strengthen the confidence of NGOs in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine through exchange and communication with representatives from the Baltic States and to develop a «road map» of potentials and «no-go-areas» for actions. In addition, the project established a network among organizations of the region and transferred management skills during joint events as the conference, facilitation and presentation trainings and the joint investigations for this publication.

In sum, as a result of this project, capacities, skills and competences among NGOs in the fields of management, public appearance and with regard to the evaluation of environmental policy were increased and the ties between organizations beyond the core project partners were strengthened. It was common among conference participants to find it a recurring highlight in the annual calendar of NGOs in the region.

Introduction

Environmental policy has a lot of definitions, underlining different aspects and disclosing diverse character of the term itself and its wide interpretation in different countries and documents. For the purpose of this publication, we would consider «environmental policy» a tool for ensuring public environmental rights in order to discuss why so-called third sector organisations (or NGOs in short) are intervening into environmental policy process and how efficient this intervention is.

Environmental rights, forming a part of the general human rights concept, attracted attention of the civil sector in the last decades due to its close connection with human health, social well-being and sustainable development issues. The traditional consideration of environmental policy as «nature protection actions» is also important for many organisations and players in the policy arena (as we will clearly see below).

In Eastern European countries, however, this attitude is changing towards higher complexity and integration of different issues. Such complex or integrated approaches help to lift environmental policy to a higher level on the political agenda and to attract more proponents who are currently no longer limited to only nature protection, but focusing on new emerging issues (such as GMOs) or integrating social and health aspects into their vision of contemporary policy. Based on this definition, it is becoming clear why more and more NGOs are stepping into the environmental policy arena and are trying to contribute to the policy development process in order to be considered serious actors promoting the interests of the public.

The activity of non-governmental organisations in the policy processes is a rather new phenomenon in former Soviet Union countries where the investigations were carried out. Generally speaking, this is one of the outcomes of the transformation process and the development of democracy in the majority of countries and an expanding civil sector is penetrating into all spheres of life with an aim to ensure public participation in decision-making and access to justice. Therefore environmental NGOs, like others in different policy areas are trying to bring up public concerns about envi-

ronmental problems and act as equal partners with other stakeholders in policy development, implementation and enforcement processes.

It is obvious that not all states are ready for such active positioning of «outsiders», which is often regarded as «annoying» or «destructive» – in this case, NGOs are seen only as perpetual naggers without offering constructive solutions for improvement.

However, other regimes are ready to accept a new player in the field as far as they see that NGOs are able to be a reliable and capable partner in the decision-making process due to higher transparency of the process, increasing public support, and sometimes offering the possibility to share responsibilities and even make a solid contribution. This is a rather simplified, if not naïve dichotomy as in reality the picture is more complex and diversified when talking about the NGO-sector. However, we shall take this note as a point of departure and would like to discuss several issues under the broad topic “NGOs and environmental policy” based on the outcomes of the project investigations and our own expert opinion.

The main aim of this study was to get a better picture of environmental non-governmental, non-profit organizations and their roles in the environmental policy process in the Baltic States, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. These states, having a common past, are now independent for more than fifteen years after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since then developments have been highly dynamic and diverse in all six assessed countries. While the three Baltic States have been going through a comparatively linear transition from Soviet republics to independence, democratic consolidation, with the recent peak of EU membership, the three remaining countries further East have experienced a series of progress and setbacks with regard to their development of democracy. While initially a notion of democracy was the driving force towards a change in all these countries, Belarus was the first country to fall back into authoritarian patterns of governance limiting the scope of its citizens to decide on the political developments.¹

In the Russian Federation, the first experiences of democracy in the first half of the 1990s lead to a power vacuum with regard to enforcement and law implementation, causing chaotic conditions and leaving people frustrated, thus thriving for more restrictive leadership and trading in potentials for civic freedoms and opportunities to have a stronger political influence.²

Developments in the Ukraine appear rather opposite though, with a long period of stagnation until the beginning of the current decade with the occurrence of the so-called «Orange Revolution» in 2004. Despite this significant event, the most recent political developments with difficulties to form governments and stable coalitions should be a reason to stay alert in the nearest future.

Referring to environmental policies in the respective states, it is worth noting a great diversity of approaches and attitudes. For the Baltic States there is a clear domination of EU policies, i. e. there is a rather advanced and developed environmental sector with high requirements and demands. For the other countries, several experts mentioned simply an absence of environmental policies as such due to conflicting economic or political interests and a resource-dominated approach. The present study does not aim at discussing this issue; however, it is clear that the different environmental policies lead to different roles and possibilities for non-governmental organisations in each country to be involved in the process for non-governmental organisations in each country.

Given this, today's conditions are rather diverse. From a methodological point of view, however, the set of countries surveyed in this report is ideal in terms of background factors that determine the frame for further developments each country. All countries have emerged as newly independent states from the same political entity with the need to develop their own new political system, going through a more or less painful transition from a planned economy to market economies. The starting point for development of society was much the same in each of these countries with a common legal system, common lifestyle and in this particular case we should not forget the common underlying ideology and one-party rule.

2 Troszkiewicz, A.: Media and Democracy in Russia. POLIS Working paper (October 2007): London School of Economics <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/polis/pdf/RussiaMediaDemocracy.pdf> (last accessed: 02 Dec, 2007).

This study aims to find answers to the following questions: (a) What are current activities and methods applied by NGOs in these countries? (b) what are organizational conditions of NGOs in these countries, i.e. their financial capacities, the quality and quantity of their human resources, management skills, etc; (c) What are the potentials of NGOs in these countries to influence policy-making in the field of environment? and (d) Whether there are any limitations to the scope of action that NGOs face in these countries, i.e. are there legal or political restrictions that narrow the possibilities to act and to get involved.

Initial assumptions were drawn from the experience of the members of the project team, which are themselves part of the target group³ and thus are constant observers of the scene were: (a) the main field of activity would be nature conservation, as this has been traditionally the main field of activity for NGO-like organizations already during the Soviet period (b) due to the limited financial resources and the general passivity with regard to social engagement in post-socialist societies, the capacities on the whole scale should be low. With regard to the potentials for influencing policy-making and whether there are any restrictions due to the political regime, it was assumed that the countries could roughly be grouped in two blocks: The Baltic States should offer a high degree of potential, while in Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine it should be considerably lower.

3 It should be noted that all these organizations are acting on the national level (regional in the case of the Russian Federation) and aiming at international co-operation at the same time. It is assumed that thus they have a sufficient overview of the Eastern Baltic Sea region including the neighbouring countries Ukraine and Belarus, each from the perspective of their countries.

Methodology

The results presented below were obtained at first through interviews and then with the help of a survey which were both carried out in all six countries simultaneously. In a third step the results were discussed with NGO representatives at a conference in order to confirm the conclusions resemble the real situation.

About the Interviews

In total 29 interviews were carried out during early spring 2007. Interviewees were assumed to be observers and to have a sufficient overview of the NGO (in the environmental field in particular) scene in the countries and their answers should provide information for a description of the situation of NGOs from their perspective as an expert opinion. Their responses were used as an additional input for the development of the questionnaire. The main aim was to identify organizations to be included in the survey at a later stage.

Interviewees were representatives of national administrations, i.e. the Ministry of Environment, or related ministries or their substructures, the media, experts from environmental foundations and representatives of larger national or regional environmental NGO networks. Interviews were made in national languages and then translated either into English (Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian) or were left as are in Russian (Belarus, Russia, the Ukraine) to facilitate the comparative analysis.

Additional information on the interviews (such as templates and evaluation) is given in the Annex to the current report.

About the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was prepared in English, then translated in Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Russian languages and disseminated among the target group. In total some 300 questionnaires were distributed and 104 questionnaires were returned. The survey was carried out from April until August 2007. Yet with the exception of the Ukraine less than 20 questionnaires per country were returned and thus it was not possible to perform a deeper statistical analysis while claiming any significance. The survey was distributed nationwide

in all countries with the exception of Russia, where the North-Western region was selected as the region neighboring most of the other countries. In the Ukraine larger territorial units were selected for distribution.⁴

Taking into account available resources, the authors aimed to achieve indicative figures, which would then be confirmed by experts, i.e. representatives of NGOs which have an overview of the national scene and which are able to make a substantial judgment to what extent the results match the real situation. Questions were constructed to let respondents representing their organization to evaluate themselves.

The questionnaire consisted of seven sections: (1) General information about the organization and activities; (2) The functioning of the organization, assessing the human resources, environmental knowledge, and managerial skills; (3) Sources and mechanisms of funding of NGOs in the country and financial capacities of the organization; (4) Environmental policy performance, assessing opportunities to influence the policy-making process and tendencies of the organization to actually participate in it; (5) Interaction of NGOs with public administrations and legislators, trying to find out favorable or unfavorable conditions for NGOs from a legal and administrative perspective to perform their objectives in the country; (6) Means of communication and external relations: How and to what extent does the organization communicate with the target group (particularly the general public). And finally section (7) Interaction with other NGOs, in order to identify the scope of outreach, the networking among NGOs on a national or international scale.

The next chapter summarizes results from this survey including the interviews. A detailed overview of the interview analysis and the full results from the questionnaire can be found in the Annex of this report.

⁴ These regions were not selected according to politically defined boundaries, but similar to the division of the country as practiced for displaying the national weather forecast, i.e. dividing the whole country into a only a handful of larger regions.

About the NGO Conference

The NGO Conference “NGOs in Eastern Europe as actors in development and implementation of the environmental policy - Baltic Sea Action Plan and beyond” was held on 7-8 November 2007 in Jurmala, Latvia. The goal of this event was to get a feedback on the project findings and discuss them in a wider circle of NGOs, as well as get additional information and clarification on several issues raised. In general the conference was aimed to contribute to the effectiveness of NGO participation in environmental policy development and implementation in the Eastern Baltic Sea region (the Baltic States, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine). The case of Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) implementation was used in order to streamline a joint discussion.

It was attended by more than 40 participants from the Baltic States, Germany, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine representing different NGOs working in the environmental sector. Conference report is given in the annex 3 of this publication.

Analysis of results

Interview Results

NGOs in the Baltic States and neighboring countries to the East are sharing a common fate with regard to their visibility and perception by outsiders. In all countries it was a common sense, that NGOs do not have sufficient capacities, i.e. in terms of organizational and financial management and that the organizations were mostly not present in the minds of the interviewees. Many could hardly mention any particular NGO or stated that they do not really remember seeing NGOs appear visibly in the public. More positive examples with regard to the visibility are Estonia and particularly Latvia. Yet the Latvian case is more peculiar with regard to the interrelation of environmental NGOs and the governmental sector (see also below the results from the questionnaire). NGOs here are in close cooperation with the Ministry of Environment through an institutionalized round-table and exchange meetings with the administration. An association of environmental NGOs also exists in Estonia, but observers perceive them as very diverse and even contradicting in their policies, statements and interests communicated to the public. In Lithuania the overall opinion was that NGOs are not visible at all.

Interviewees from all countries frequently pointed out a lack of capacities in organizational matters, often equated to a lack of credibility in terms of specific environmental knowledge. Looking at Belarus and Ukraine, it was acknowledged that NGOs are an important factor in providing environmental knowledge to the people, as this task is not sufficiently performed by environmental authorities in the country. The interrelation between NGOs in the Baltic States and the general public was evaluated considerably more critical. One of the most clear statements was given by a Latvian interviewee, stating that it NGOs in the country appear not able to draw public attention to the real problems.

A significant problem for NGOs in Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine was considered to be the funding situation, which can be credited to a lack of competence and skills of NGOs. There are hardly any national funds (none in Belarus) to which NGOs could apply and almost all observers felt that the state should provide such funding opportunities. In the Baltic States

many observers were not aware of deeper details about the funding situation and opportunities for NGOs in their country, although some pointed out that particularly in Estonia and Latvia there are quite beneficial national funds available for environmental activities.

The overall tone of the evaluation of the NGO scene in each country was rather neutral or positive, depending on the country. Some negative feedback emerged in Russia, where one observer remarked that not only NGOs are in a weak position, but the environmental administration as well, leaving the environment as a constant loser in the power play of political and economical interests. Additionally NGOs in Russia and Belarus are facing constraints from the administrative side and are more likely to be perceived as an oppositional force, threatening the state authority, than a usefully controlling organ. In the Ukraine a similar picture is drawn, however in slightly softer tones.

Questionnaire Results

Getting to Know the Target Group

The end of the Soviet era marked the beginning of the establishment of non-governmental organizations in the region. Only in the Ukraine did we find a number of NGOs which were founded following of perestroika and glasnost years and in the aftermath of the explosion of the reactor at the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl in 1986. Due to amendments of the legal frameworks for NGOs in the Baltic States most organizations were formally founded in the most recent years, although this in practice is only the reestablishment of an already existing organization.

The majority of organizations in the region have a comparatively small number of individual members, if compared to many of their Western European counterparts. More than a half of organizations have up to a maximum of 50 members (additionally we found 13 organizations which have no members at all). Despite this there is in every country about a handful or more organizations which have quite far over 100 members.

The results are interesting with regard to the share of voluntary work and non-voluntary work. While Baltic NGOs are on the general track of the global development of NGOs towards increased professionalization in the non-profit sector, the picture looks differently in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. There we find more voluntary workers than paid staff. As we will see further below a great share of explaining this difference may be attributed to the fact that the funding situation is also significantly different in these two regions.

What environmental fields do the organizations work in? Nature and biodiversity are fields most environmental NGOs work in and additionally, all of them aim at supporting sustainable development. This is not very surprising as nature conservation issues are probably the core of environmental protection and since the 1990s, sustainable development has become an omnipresent term and an objective of any environmental funding program. However, looking further into the results, we find that health was very frequently mentioned by NGOs from Belarus, Russia and the Ukraine. There NGOs are very important players providing information to the public. Furthermore, topics like waste and climate change were frequently mentioned, however quite equally spread across the countries without any salient grouping.

When looking at the types of activities which the questioned NGOs performed in different fields, we find that high ranking issues are raising public awareness and capacity building, while the latter was not specified with regard to form and target groups. Scientific research was not performed by the vast majority of respondents and almost at the bottom of ranking we find political activities, like lobbying for policies or policy assessment. Despite this there are many organizations in all countries participating in political working groups. Yet if looking a bit more at measures which NGOs applied most frequently in the past years, again, we can make a distinction between new EU members in the Baltic States and non EU-members: while the former focus on the organization of workshops and conferences, we find more political activity, like organizing public protest actions, initiating and/or supporting petitions and filing law suits in the latter countries. Recalling differences for voluntary versus paid work, these results can be explained by the necessity to have a certain ideal and non-material interest that is connected with voluntary work and usually these non-material interests are closely linked with political interests.

About the functioning of NGOs

This section on the functioning of NGOs tries to explain the basis on which NGOs organize their work and what they consider themselves good at and where they see challenges for their daily work. Most striking is the division of voluntary and professional work force. While Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian NGOs are mostly run on a voluntary basis, professional staff is dominant in NGOs in the Baltic States. In this sense Baltic NGOs reflect the general development of non-governmental organizations in Western Europe, the United States or Japan in the past ten years – a development towards more professionalized operations, thus becoming a sector of the labor market.

Clearly, in the six countries, environmental protection in NGOs often is organized by women, while in the Ukraine there is still a comparatively higher amount of men active in environmental NGOs, this is not the case in the other countries. Furthermore, the most frequent educational background among the staff is natural sciences, which was not further specified in the survey, followed by social sciences/humanities, technical and engineering, whose shares are approximately equally high. In contrast, the amount of people active in NGOs with economic or legal background is very low.

Organizations were asked to evaluate their strengths in the following fields: program and project development, project management and implementation, financial management, public appearance, event organization, content knowledge (environmental fields) and networking abilities. As an overall conclusion, the vast majority of respondents claim to have good or very good competences in all the above mentioned areas with the exception of financial management. This is where a majority of Latvian, Belarusian and Ukrainian NGOs claimed to have low experiences. This of course is a crucial issue with regard to credibility and reliability of NGOs in the region.

However there is a generally high self-confidence and even though the level of competence may not always be exactly as high as the respondents claim, it shows a high potential also for overcoming challenges which they consider the most impacting in their everyday work. The following items were presented in the survey and again, a self-evaluation was requested from respondents, if they are: lacking environmental knowledge; lacking access to information; lacking management capacities; lacking sufficient funding to reach their objectives; lacking human resources; hampered

in their work by political restrictions; lacking of public interest and if legal restrictions or heavy and complicated bureaucracy is posing an obstacle to their work. The picture here is quite diverse, however access to information is not marked as a challenge in any of the countries; still it may be an issue in Russia and Belarus if official statistics is required. This is also reflected in the difficulties these NGOs face in the political environment they are acting in: bureaucracy is a burden for NGOs in Belarus and Lithuania, while Belarusian NGOs additionally feel hampered by political and legal restrictions in their everyday work. Quite significantly organizations in Lithuania, Russia and Ukraine point out that one of the major challenges they are facing is a lack of public interest in their activities. To some extent this was also confirmed by other countries. This in fact is crucial if it comes to the public support in form of recruiting new personnel and voluntary work or even with regard to financial donations.

Sources and Mechanisms of Funding

Most organizations in the region are dependent on project-based funding, only among Russian respondents we find a higher number of organizations which can rely primarily on an institutionalized subsistence funding and which do not depend on acquiring funds by applying for projects from different donors, national and international. In contrast to many of their Western European counterparts, this puts NGOs in the region into a continuous struggle to secure funding of every single salary and availability of funds is very different in the region assessed here. In the Baltic States we find a significantly wider variety of funds available to environmental NGOs, than in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. Not only that they have access to the wide funding landscape of the European Union, they also have national funding sources, usually on state level, which is also widely used, especially in Latvia and Estonia. EU funding is either the source with the next highest frequency or even the highest, in Estonia and Lithuania. The difficulty for NGOs further towards the East is the fact, that not only a lot of EU funding is often only indirectly accessible to them, through partnerships with a beneficiary from the European Union, but also other international funding is not available to a similar extent. In all three countries, i.e. Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus

there is either no national funding available or it is of no comparable significance (Grants of Public Chamber - Russia).⁴

The weakest source in all countries is private donations, a source of a great importance for NGOs in Western European countries. There are two primary reasons why individuals have not found it beneficial or interesting to donate to non-for-profit organizations. Firstly, the individual interests are currently very much focused on increasing their own living standards and finally benefiting from the overall economic development. Secondly, there have been no fiscal incentives, like tax relieves, which made it attractive and beneficial to donate part of the income to a charitable organization. In fact there are first developments towards this in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and it could be a good step towards widening the opportunities for NGO funding, but also for more engagement of the general public in their activities.

Furthermore, annual budgets of the responding organizations were assessed, i.e. the money which they received on their accounts in the past three years. In fact it showed that they have been comparatively stable and correspond to some extent to the overall economical performance of the countries. They were highest in Estonia, between 50.000-99.000 EUR, followed by Lithuania, Latvia, Russia (25.000-49.999 EUR), the Ukraine (up to 10.000 EUR). However taking into consideration that the share of professional work force is much higher in the Baltic States, the demand for a higher budget is of course a necessity to keep up operations, while relying on voluntary workers lets organizations perform quite well, even with a significantly lower budget.

To Do or Not to Do: Influencing Environmental Policy

One of the main aims of this assessment was to identify potentials of NGOs to influence environmental policy in their country or even beyond, e.g. on the EU level. First of all it must be stated, that in all countries with the exception of Lithuania, a majority of NGOs claims to have an aim to influence environmental policy. Moreover, there is quite large number of NGOs, especially in the Baltic States, which are members of political working groups. However recalling the major meas-

4 Official web-site of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation: <http://www.oprf.ru>.

ures that NGOs use to achieve their goals, we hardly found any political measures used to a larger extent in the Baltic States. The discussions during the conference which was held after of the survey showed that a large number of well known activists of the environmental NGO scene in Estonia have recently been elected into parliament and are directly at the heart of policy making, while in Latvia there is a joint round table organized by the coalition of environmental NGOs and the Ministry of Environment. Despite giving NGOs access to the ministerial level and exchanging their view points about different issues of environmental policy it cannot be said to what extent NGOs act, e.g. as critical watch dogs or are challenging the national policy-making.

In Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine, NGOs are obviously trying out more to go to the limits of their public engagement, as they are more restricted with access to information and political working groups. Recalling the measures applied by NGOs, initiating and supporting a petition is an opportunity to attempt to make your voice at least heard towards the legislators. Most respondents considered that the chances of successfully influencing political decisions are higher on the local level (level closer to the citizen) and lower on the national level. Belarusian NGOs, however, considered it impossible to successfully influence political decisions at any level.

In addition, this survey tried to explore if there are any so-called 'no-go-areas' for NGOs and in what policy fields they can be found. No-go-areas in this context are areas, where becoming active may have significant legal consequences either for an individual or for the organization's existence as a whole. From a democratic point of view practically any topic should be open to social actors. Although there are times when it is challenging to address some issues in consolidated democracies, e.g. if pollution of the environment is caused by military or politically important actors, it should not be understood as a no-go-area. Results of this question show, that there is a clear division between the EU member states and the non EU countries. The majority of Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian NGOs clearly state that there are such no-go-areas in their countries, such as military and state security. Influencing other state affairs, like policy development and inspection, i.e. observing law enforcement are mainly areas of concern for NGOs in Belarus, where they are best advised to keep out or at least to carefully think over how to act.

From a perspective of democratic development this shows, that in all countries there are still deficits, though of different natures. NGOs in the Baltic States do not face any serious political restrictions, but, quite often, do not see a need to take an oppositional role towards government policies, as it is common among their Western counterparts. In opposition the political climate for NGOs in the non EU countries is comparatively rougher in general.

Interaction with Public Administrations and Legislators

Different political conditions for NGOs in these six countries raise questions about how much administrations accept NGO involvement and how NGOs feel they are treated. The respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree to the following: For any kind of administrative procedure, we can expect equal and fair treatment; In court cases we can expect to win against state institutions; NGOs are generally treated equally by judiciary; Corruption is needed to implement our activities; Our public administration that we need to deal with most frequently is generally co-operative. In total, answers were fairly negative, given the fact that for many items less than a half of respondents could give a positive response. In the Baltic States, the attitude towards each other is probably neutral, if at best pragmatic. In the Ukraine, it is a bit less positive, however still contrasting with the results from Russia and Belarus, where either not all items were answered or the perception of NGOs was that they are treated not equally with respect to state or economic actors. Stronger notions of disrespect become overt when asking directly if NGOs feel treated as partners or a public nuisance that often simply requires the authorities to deal with and to involve them by law. In fact, in the Baltic states for most NGOs it was hard to say, whether they are partners or a nuisance. In Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine, a number also felt they were considered as a political opposition, however more frequently they felt simply ignored by the authorities and administrations.

In many Western European countries, charitable organizations are granted certain fiscal or legal advantages in return for providing their services for the general public on the basis of non-profit making. For example VAT exemption or money that was charged for fines from convicts in court. In some countries, like Germany, NGOs may provide commercial serv-

ice under certain conditions with a reduced VAT rate. With the exception of Estonia, and Ukraine, the majority of NGOs were not aware of favourable conditions or they really do not exist in these countries. However, it may be said that the level of creating a more beneficial surrounding for NGOs in contrast to pure commercial entities is still not so significant as it may be in old EU member states, but they do exist in all assessed countries and most notably the favourable conditions are tax exemption, simplified administrative procedures, and lower office rents.

External relations and means of communication

Another relevant issue in order to be able to influence policies is the capacity to access the public to make the organization's voice heard. Practically no type of media item that was assessed (newspapers, TV, internet, radio, organizing public events, and dissemination of flyers) was considered inaccessible for NGOs in any of the countries. Furthermore, there are similar preferences for media to use in all the countries. Most frequently used are: public events, followed by internet and articles in newspapers. Yet, the picture turned out to be very diverse with all of the questioned types of media being used by environmental NGOs in the region.

When asking organizations about the success of their public relation activities, approximately a half of respondents consider their activities as successful and the same amount declared their success as average. This becomes a bit clearer, when looking at the figures of what kind of impact they can achieve with their activities. Especially the interrelation with the general public is a topic where wishes and results may be far apart from each other. In Lithuania for example, NGOs that claim to represent the general public, find it difficult to mobilise do not receive much support from them. This is in line with the result from the interview, that NGOs in Lithuania are not very visible.

Clearly, this picture is not much better in the other countries. NGOs attract very little general public interest. Yet it must be noted that almost nowhere more than a half of the respondents claim to have an interest in serving the general public.

Interaction with other NGOs

Most NGOs which participated in the survey are not lonely fighters for a better environment, but are doing this in co-operation with others, on a national or regional level, as well as internationally. Quite many organizations are well known beyond the region or the country borders they mainly act in and this is in fact a result of successful interregional or international co-operation.

NGOs Conference Results

Major input to this publication was provided by participating NGOs at the 1st working groups' discussions covering good and bad practices in countries, instruments and tools used by NGOs in the environmental policy process and their effectiveness, no-go areas, restrictions and a road map for NGOs in the future and evaluation of the NGOs effectiveness in the environmental policy process.

In general, these discussions confirmed some conclusions from the interviews and questionnaire. For example, administrative barriers and bureaucracy were mentioned by several NGOs as impediments for their activities, mainly in Russia and Belarus. Local and regional level was mentioned as the most efficient for cooperation with authorities, whereas not all NGOs are ready and able to go on the national level in order to lobby public interests. Some good practices in NGO cooperation with authorities in the form of councils and roundtables were brought up as concrete examples of positive cooperation.

In addition, several other points were noted while discussing the activities of NGOs in each country. For example, it was said that NGOs are more stable than administrations and authorities in some countries and this often leads or is linked to high professional level of NGOs expertise in their particular field of activities. So, in this case NGOs are changing their role towards expert advice instead of conventional campaigning or opposition thus trying to use "soft" instruments in order to influence decision-making. One more fact was noted – due to growing public demands on democracy development, the state is sometimes creating "phantoms" i.e. imitating public engagement into decision-making process in order to report on own "good will" and governments have their own "pocket" organizations which are taken as NGOs voice.

NGO effectiveness in environmental policy process was one of the most complicated issues to discuss. During interviewing phase, the project team was also trying to get some advice on the effectiveness – and, basically, most of respondents were not clear how to measure it. This is clear that such effectiveness should be quantitatively measurable in order to avoid misinterpretation, however, this measurability might lead to simplification of the process and the lack of integrated evaluation. Possible numeric indicators in this regard could be, for example:

- Number of active members/supporters
- Participation in the legal development (share of proposed acts/accepted laws)
- Lobbying public interests – number of court cases (if applicable)
- Number of mass-media quotations
- Number of professional NGOs per capita and time of their existence
- Different profiles and preferred actions (several types of activities and their shares)
- Number of visibility items etc.

Referring to the results of questionnaire on NGOs vs. society, participants discussed how active is society in general and how NGOs might activate the public in order to get support for environmental actions. As it was underlined most of the people are not active if they are not directly affected by any problems or actions, and people are getting concerned if something is changing their life or influencing their traditional activities. NGOs would need active society for influencing policy process, for example, calling for better transparency, or showing either public support or disagreement to state policies/decisions. One more field, where NGOs would like to see active citizens is market performance where motivated consumers might vote for better environmental solutions by making own choice. Consumers is a good illustration of the public influence on certain issues as far as policy changes can be done not only through direct lobbying of politicians, but also via changing market demands or electorate opinion. Thus more awareness raising actions are preferred by NGOs as a tool for forming environmentally conscious society.

Baltic Sea Action Plan, which was discussed as a policy tool for environmental protection in the Baltic region, could be an excellent niche for

NGOs and other stakeholders' contributions to environmental activities. As at the present relevant national actions plans are to be elaborated, all NGOs were advised to follow up this process in their home countries in order to take an active part in these plans development and, later on, in the implementation process.

Country information

| 17



This publication covers six countries – three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. In order to show some country-specific issues, country profiles were elaborated by the project partners using a standard template to allow better comparison. Major issues covered are significant environmental problems and policy, legal

frameworks for NGOs participation, and the situation with NGOs activities in the field of environmental policy.

The countries are different in terms of size, population, economy and political regimes. Major characteristics are given in the tables below for better overview.

	Belarus	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania	Russia	Ukraine
Population (in million)	9.72	1,32	2,26	3.58	141.37	46.30
GDP (PPP in Euro)	71 billion	19.4 billion	27.0 billion	40.2 billion	1,400 trillion	217 billion
GDP per capita (PPP in Euro)	6,900	14,700	11,900	11,300	9,900	4,700
GDP real growth rate	6,8%	7,9%	10,3%	8,0%	7,6%	6,9%

Data source: CIA World Fact Book 2007. All figures are mid 2007 estimates.
PPP: Purchasing power parity

Belarus

Main environmental issues and environmental policy

In the context of the environment, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection has introduced a policy and legislative framework. The framework environmental law is the Law on Environmental Protection adopted in 1992, last amended in 2002. The Law stipulates the principles and tasks of environmental protection, and specifies the objects (environmental media) and subjects (citizens, legal persons, administrative territorial units, and the Republic of Belarus) and their interrelations. It also reflects the main direction of State environmental policy and management, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens and public associations needed to set environmental norms. These norms include standards and certification, and requirements related to design, construction, reconstruction, exploitation, closure or liquidation of facilities whose activities may have an impact on the environment.

Current environmental policy is developed through five-year national action plans for the rational use of natural resources and environmental protection (NEAPs). The current NEAP covers the period 2006-2010 and identifies the following main priorities: waste management, protection of atmospheric air, ozone layer and climate, protection of rational use of water resources, protection of land and soils, rational use of sub-soil resources, preservation of biological and landscape diversity, improvement of environmental legislation, further development of economic instruments of environmental policy, environmental monitoring, and environmental education.

Belarus has developed a number of strategies, plans and programmes for socio-economic development, including those related to environmental protection and the use of natural resources. Among the most recent and comprehensive is the National Strategy for Sustainable Development until 2020 adopted in 2004. While the objectives of these documents are often well developed, the financial means for their implementation are not spelled out. As a result, many of the well-intentioned programmes are implemented only partially. The national environmental strategy is still at

a conceptual stage, but there are many other nationwide programmes and plans that guide environmental policy development.

In terms of public access to environmental information and participation in environmental decision-making, Belarus has ratified the Aarhus Convention, which commits the government to developing an operational regulatory framework to ensure the effective implementation of all its provisions.

Legal framework for NGO participation

Belarus has relatively well developed legal provisions and regulations to guarantee access to environmental information. However, the legislative framework for public participation in environmental decision-making is less elaborated. Also, public participation in environmental decision-making depends, to a great extent, on the overall conditions in a country for civil society associations such as environmental NGOs to operate, starting with their legal and taxation "climate".

Although the amendments to the Law on Environmental Protection adopted in 2002 provide broader rights to environmental NGOs, there are no detailed procedures ensuring public participation in environmental impact assessment (ecological expertise) and decision-making regarding environmental permits, standard-setting or development of laws, regulations, strategies and policies affecting the environment.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection has established the Public Coordinating Ecological Council to discuss with NGOs concrete actions and policy issues. The Ministry convenes the Council periodically to discuss issues like the draft national action plan for the rational use of natural resources and environmental protection, the accession of Belarus to the Kyoto Protocol or a new draft law on environmental protection. NGOs complain, however, that the Council is only discussing without enough concrete results. Similar public coordinating ecological councils were established with all regional environmental committees.

Existing and draft laws are published in the press and on the web site of the National Centre of Legal Information (<http://ncpi.gov.by>). In addition, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection posts legal environmental acts on its web site. However, this is not supplemented by a mechanism or procedures to collect comments from the

public on draft legislation. Regulations are not posted on these two web sites as their distribution to the public is not obligatory according to current legislation.

There are general legal provisions ensuring public participation in decision-making concerning plans and programmes. However, there are no detailed procedures to put these provisions into practice. The public has been involved in the development of the National Strategy for Sustainable Social and Economic Development for the period up to the year 2020. The National Strategy for Sustainable Social and Economic Development envisages the development of measures, including legal procedures and mechanisms, to promote the participation of NGOs in decision-making concerning social, economic and environmental policies, as well as partnerships of public authorities with NGOs. However, NGOs are not represented in the National Commission on Sustainable Development, which monitors the Strategy's implementation.

There is no public participation foreseen in the operation of environmental funds, and experience with public participation in environmental impact assessment is very limited. At most, an NGO can organize a public expertise of a planned activity and submit the results to the State Ecological Expertise for possible consideration.

NGO situation description

The 1999 amendments to the Law on Public Associations followed by the adoption of various regulations introduced general conditions for NGOs. As a result, the number of NGOs, including environmental NGOs, is very low. According to the Ministry of Justice, there were 2,259 NGOs (245 international, 726 national and 1,288 local) and 17 NGO unions registered in the country by 1 January 2005. The Ministry qualified 47 organizations as environmental NGOs. This is extremely low compared with most other UNECE countries and is clearly disproportionate to the high level of environmental awareness and education in Belarus.

Activities of non-registered organizations (e.g. interest clubs, youth groups) are prohibited. The registration procedure is complicated, long and expensive. A quarter of registration requests are refused. Judicial authorities scrupulously monitor NGO compliance with the legislation. There are certain legal requirements for NGOs to report annually on their activities to judicial authorities.

Most NGOs operate in Minsk and other big cities and have an active core of 5 to 8 people.

NGO programmes have been supported by foreign donors. New regulations on foreign assistance complicate the access to international financing (which has been the only source for most NGOs so far).

Today all aid received from abroad can be broken into the following 2 categories: 1) international technical assistance and 2) foreign gratuitous aid. Marking aid into these categories determines if it will be overseen by Ministry of Economy (international technical assistance) or in the Department for Humanitarian Activity (foreign gratuitous aid). Sufficient tax remissions and customs preferences are offered for implementation of international technical assistance programs, but the fact that there is no law on charities (which would give some NGOs tax-free status, for instance) generally hampers NGO operation.

Themes and activities covered, methods used to reach goals

The main activities of Belarusian NGOs include spreading environmental information, popularizing the idea of sustainable development, environmental education, conducting environmental monitoring, consulting and developing public ecological expertise, environmental campaigning, and conducting specialized seminars and training.

How NGOs are organized

There are few networks of environmental NGOs in Belarus:

Green Partnership is an informal cooperation network, established in 2007 aiming to raise environmental public awareness, to improve public access to environmental information and public participation in ensuring effective environmental policy and to promote the right for favorable environment. Currently it has 8 members.

Belarusian Dnieper river network unites NGOs and initiative groups from local communities working with Dniper problems.

GreenNet is an informal network of environmental NGOs, initiative groups and eco-activists that was created for strengthening of public participation into environmental decision mak-

ing process. The network carried out joint activities in different thematic working groups by using instruments of the Aarhus convention.

Belarussian NGOs also participate in several international networks such as: European EcoForum, ANPED, WECF, Bird Life International, IPEN, Inforce, World wide green-builder network.

Experience with policy lobbying, policy development and implementation

The experience so far is as follows: Belarusian Ecotourism and Rural Tourism Association and NGO “Women for revival of Naroch region” played a role in the development of ecotourism and rural tourism and participated in drafting the new law on tourism.

NGO Ecohome has organized and carried out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of a national strategy of sustainable development until 2020.

NGO Ecopravo has prepared a guidebook for environmental inspectors on carrying out of monitoring of environmental legislation.

NGO BirdLife Belarus is involved in the preparation of the management plans of the specially protected natural areas.

NGO Green Region collects information about rare and endangered plant of species to prepare the base for the creation of specially protected natural areas in Brest region.

Initiative group FRI and NGO Ecoproject took an active part in discussions and influenced the decision on signing the Stockholm Convention.

NGO representatives took part in the development and consideration of the draft National Strategy on Sustainable Development up to the year of 2020.

NGO Ecoproject Partnership initiated the process of Local Agenda 21 for Pervomaiski district of Minsk and participated in the development of the program on public awareness raising on separate waste collection in Minsk.

NGO Belarussian Association of experts and surveyors on transport participated in the development of the Program on creation of parking places in Minsk.

Estonia

Main environmental issues and environmental policy

The national authority organizing and coordinating development and implementation of the environmental policy in Estonia is the Ministry of the Environment.

According to its annual report 2006, the main environmental issues that ministry has been dealing with are: environmental management, ensuring the clean drinking water, organizing wastewater treatment, waste management and management of air pollution, sustainable use of nature resources, preservation of biodiversity, collection, analysis and publishing of environmental data, enhancing environmental awareness of the public and involving public into environmental protection, developing infrastructure for land and spatial data and, improving environmental surveillance. Activities related to public involvement include regular meetings between the Ministry and environmental NGOs and financial support for bigger NGOs as well as involvement of stakeholders in development of important strategic plans (e.g. Estonian environmental strategy and action plan).

The Estonian Green Party was established in November 2006 and was successful already in the first parliament elections in March 2007, receiving 6 seats in the Parliament. The Green Party Faction in the Parliament consists of five former active NGO leaders and one long-time nature conservationist from a protected area – however, this left several NGOs without their charismatic leaders and in need for capacity building at their leadership.

Legal framework for NGO participation

General rights of public participation are prescribed in the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia. However, as pointed out by the NGOs, it should also include the right for clean environment, which is currently not mentioned.

Estonia has ratified Århus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters in June 2001. Recently (2007), the second report on implementation of this convention has been prepared by the Ministry of the Environment in cooperation

with other authorities, NGOs and other interested stakeholders. According to this report, the legal framework concerning NGOs is satisfactory and involvement of NGOs by public authorities in different committees, working groups, commenting of draft legal acts has significantly increased in recent last years. However, in practice the contribution possibilities and rights of NGOs are still often limited.

Public participation is also regulated by different national acts like Public Information Act, Administrative Procedure Act and Regulation on Technical Rules for Drafts of Legislation of General Application as well as legal acts regulating the environmental field that foresee an open procedure, for example Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Management System Act, and Water Act.

The State Chancellery has developed a good practice for involving the public sector. Based on that different Ministries (including Ministry of the Environment) have developed their internal principles and guidelines for involvement of the public and stakeholders. Activities and goals related to improvement of involvement of public and stakeholders are included also in the Development Plan of the Ministry of the Environment.

Estonian Civil Society Development Concept regulates roles and cooperation of the public and non-profit sector in developing and implementing public policies and building up the civic society. Based on its long-term priorities, Development Plan for Civic Initiative Support 2007-2010 has been developed, which aims at creating favorable conditions for civic engagement in Estonia.

NGO situation description

The establishment and operating of NGOs in Estonia is regulated by two national legal acts: the Foundations Act and the Non-profit Associations Act.

According to the Non-profit Associations and Foundations Register of the Ministry of Justice there are currently 25 104 non-profit associations⁵ and 749 foundations⁶ in Estonia (registered by 1 September 2007). Division

by activity fields unfortunately does not give overview on existing environmental organizations because environment is not classified as separate activity field. Environmental organizations should probably be classified under "other societal, social and personal service". By 1 September 2007 there were 11 956 such non-profit associations and 484 foundations established in Estonia. Additionally there are non-registered non-juridical associations (societies) but their number is not known. Institute for Sustainable Development (SEI-Tallinn) carried out a study of environmental organizations in 2005 (Mardiste, P. et al, 2005) where they identified 348 organizations acting in the environmental field, including 100 NGOs that they classified as sure environmental organizations.⁷

Environmental NGOs in Estonia have mostly project based funding, coming from international/European funds or national funds.

Analysing projects financed by the Estonian Environmental Investment Centre in 2006, the total sum allocated for the environmental programme was approximately 38,1 Million EUR (1467 projects), from which about 4,5 Million EUR (357 projects) were applied by NGOs. The biggest number of financed NGO projects deals with environmental awareness raising and forestry issues.

There is very little subsistence funding available for NGOs in Estonia. The Ministry of the Environment supports larger environmental organizations (Estonian Society for Nature Conservation, Estonian Council of Environmental NGOs) to ensure possibilities for participation in discussions and decision processes for them. However, continuity

7 The following definition was used: an environmental organization

- 1) is a juridical person (non-profit organization or foundation), which activities by its statute include "environmental protection", nature conservation, protection of some parts of environment or nature, e.g. air protection, water protection, bird protection etc., or a non-juridical association (society) that acts in fields of environmental protection or nature conservation;
- 2) acts in favour of general interests, i.e. the association takes into account the interests of its members but also represents the interests of general public/whole society;
- 3) can be a custody organization not only for its members but for raising and solving questions important for the whole society;
- 4) is a voluntary association, i.e. its activity and administration is independent (from government and business enterprises)

5 A non-profit association is a voluntary association of persons the objective or main activity of which shall not be the earning of income from economic activity.

6 A foundation is a legal person in private law which has no members and which is established to administer and use assets to achieve the objectives specified in its articles of association.

of NGOs and inconsistent funding are still problems for environmental organizations in Estonia (Arhus report 2007).

Some environmental organizations are also financially supported by people or companies. This is done through membership fees or donations from individual persons or companies. There are 10 environmental NGOs in Estonia having more than 100 members, including Estonian Nature Conservation Society with 9000 members (Uustal, M., Kuldna, P., 2006)

Some environmental organizations, like Estonian Animal Protection Society and Estonian Fund for Nature are actively gathering donations for implementing certain activities. They have relevant banner solicitations on their homepages and sometimes organize wider campaigns to support a specific project. Donated sums are deducted from the taxable income of the donators. In Estonia, organizations operating in the public interests can apply for entry into the list of non-profit associations and foundations benefiting from income tax incentives.

Themes and activities covered, methods used to reach goals

The great majority of Estonian environmental NGOs are acting in the field of nature and biodiversity and sustainable development. The most frequent activities of NGOs include public awareness raising, education, information dissemination and capacity building activities, while legal advice, policy assessment and policy lobbying are very rare activities among Estonian environmental NGOs.

How NGOs are organized

The most known national umbrella organization of environmental NGOs, accepted also by the Ministry of the Environment as a cooperation partner, is the Council of Estonian Environmental NGOs (EKO). EKO is an informal cooperation network, established in 2002 with the aim to influence environmental policy more effectively. Currently it has 9 members. Environmental NGOs also belong to other national networks like the Network of Estonian Non-profit Organizations and Foundations, Estonian Ornithological Society, Movement of villages and small towns "Kodukant", Network of Development Cooperation, Estonian National Youth Council, Biosphere Programme.

Estonian environmental NGOs are members of even more international networks, including Taiga Rescue Network, Coalition Clean Baltic, Forest Stewardship Council International, Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), European Network of Training Organizations (ENTO), International Network for Environmental Management (INEM), EU-Praxi.net⁸, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Justice and Environment, CPI, Global Water Partnership (GWP), WINGS, Living Lakes, BirdLife International, World Society for the Protection of Animals; Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, International Union of Societies of Foresters (IUSF), EU-SPIN etc.

Experience with policy lobbying, policy development and implementation

As mentioned before, involvement of NGOs into different working groups and committees has increased in recent years and NGOs are using this avenue to participate in development and implementation of environmental policy. For example, environmental NGOs are participating in working groups related to environmental education, environmental management, sustainable development of rural areas and regional policy, Estonian-Russian Transboundary Water Commission, Forest FSC, EKO, Bird Directive expert group, development of Estonian oil-shell energy development plan, working groups at Ministry of Agriculture (on rural development plan, fisheries development strategy), development of strategy and operational plans for use of Structural Funds. Questionnaire respondents also noted cooperation with municipalities and the Estonian Green Party.

Since 2004 regular roundtable discussion meetings of the Ministry of the Environment and environmental NGOs are organized where strategic problems of environmental policy as well as topical questions are discussed. Protocols of these meetings are available on Ministry's home page. Currently nine members of Estonian Council of Environmental NGOs and a few other organizations are participating in those meetings but in principle it is open also for other environmental organizations.

⁸ A network of European partners active in the field of training and education (<http://www.eu-praxi.net/>)

An important role of NGOs is to act as watchdogs concerning implementation of environmental policy and interfere in cases where public rights or environmental requirements are violated. In 2006 Estonian administrative courts received 28 complaints related to environmental law, but most NGOs consider filing law suits too expensive (in terms of money as well as potential later adverse attitude, especially on local level).

Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF) has provided free legal assistance for organizations as well as single persons on environmental issues in 2002-2004. With help of ELF lawyers, several court cases have been won and several areas valuable for biodiversity and/or local people have been saved (e.g. cases of Reiu veneer factory, Rannu peat mine, Ääsmäe landfill, housing project of Nõmme sand heath in Tallinn or planning jailhouse into Jämejala park). However, some cases were also lost, like case against the building of a big recreation complex on Paluküla grove hill or the building of a port into a planned Natura 2000 area in Küdema bay, Saaremaa. The latter is the most famous case where ELF lost the case against port developer and the Ministry of the Environment. However, ELF is still considering the possibility of appeal to Chancellor of Justice and European Commission for evaluation of legality of building of this port.

Currently free legal assistance service has been suspended due to lack of resources but ELF is still monitoring developments in environmental law and publishing a weekly overview on their home page on official announcements related to environmental impact assessments, applications for environmental permits, taking nature objects under protection and other important issues.

In November 2007 ELF and three environmental lawyers founded the Centre for Environmental Law – a foundation with the aim to enhance the development of environmental law and contribute to the improvement of the quality of environmental decisions and legislation. The new organization will cooperate with environmental NGOs as well as authorities. It will deal with analysis of environmental decisions, contribute to discussion and information dissemination concerning environmental law (including establishment of a special home page) and offer a priced legal service on environmental issues. The foundation is financed by Open Estonian Fund Baltic-American Partnership Programme, European association Justice & Environment and European Commission DG Environment.

Latvia

Main environmental issues and environmental policy

The institution responsible for development and implementation of the environmental policy in Latvia is the Ministry of the Environment. According to its annual review 2006, the main environmental issues are: preservation of biodiversity, improvement of drinking water quality and sewage systems, waste management, transboundary pollution, promoting use of renewable energy resources, improvement of energy efficiency and prevention of Baltic Sea pollution and its coastal zone degradation. The review states that one of the crucial aspects in reaching the objectives of the Ministry of the Environment is enhanced public participation in environmental policy development and implementation. However, the chapter on public participation focuses rather on information supply such as media campaigns or improvement of website and not so much on activities promoting active involvement in policy development and implementation. Nevertheless, there exists one mechanism allowing for active discussion between NGOs and policy makers, namely, the environmental advisory board under the Ministry of the Environment that unites representatives of 19 NGOs.

The Latvian green party was established in 1990 and besides an interruption from 1998-2002 it has always held places in the Parliament (currently 4 seats) and usually provides the cabinet with the environmental ministers position. For a brief period a member of green party held the prime minister's position in 2004 and was a parliament speaker in 2007. A few active members and leaders of the green NGOs are also members of the green party.

Legal framework for NGO participation

General rights of public participation are prescribed in Latvia's Constitution. They are also reflected in policy documents such as the Basic Guidelines for Policy Planning and Basic Guidelines on Government Communication Policy as well as in specific laws regulating different governmental procedures (Miezaine, 2003). NGOs can submit an opinion on legislative proposals at any stage. NGOs can also participate and publicly express their opinion in meetings of state secretaries and meetings of Cabinet Committees. More specifically re-

garding environmental issues, Latvia has ratified in October 2002 the Aarhus Convention, which regulates access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. At the time of writing the 2nd Implementation Report of the Aarhus Convention is under preparation.

Work of NGOs is regulated by the Associations (Societies) and Foundations Law, which among other things regulates public activities of associations⁹ and foundations.¹⁰ It states that NGOs have the right to perform activities which are not in contradiction with law, especially to distribute freely information regarding its own activities, to establish its own publications and other mass media, to organize meetings, street processions and pickets, as well as to perform other public activities in order to achieve the goals laid down in the articles of association. In addition, an NGO may apply to State and local government authorities in matters related to its goals, as well as to maintain the rights of its members or interests protected by law in a court (Article 10). Moreover, a number of specific European environmental laws like Environmental Impact Assessment Directive or Water Framework Directive (WFD) require explicit NGO involvement. Their implementation in Latvia is performed in different ways. For example, for the WFD Advisory Boards were established in 2006 for each river basin district, which is not formally required by the Directive. Each of the boards has met twice and discussed the main river basin management issues. For other directives, public hearings are widely used to obtain opinions of NGOs and the general public.

NGO situation description

According to the Register of Associations and Foundations, there are 11304 NGOs (either in the form of association or foundation) in Latvia. However, the register does not allow the determining of the number on environmental NGOs as environment is not classified as separate activity. Nevertheless, interviewing environmental officials and key NGOs themselves, they see an environment advisory board under auspices of the Ministry of the

9 An association is a voluntary union of persons founded to achieve the goal specified in the articles of association, which shall not have a profit-making nature.

10 A foundation, also a fund, is an aggregate of property that has been set aside for the achievement of a goal specified by the founder; which shall not have a profit-making nature.

Environment as one of the most important mechanisms to involve NGOs in environmental policy making in Latvia.

NGOs in Latvia operate mainly on project-based funding. There is very little subsistence funding available for environmental NGOs in Latvia. Most national project-based funding for NGOs comes from Environmental Protection Fund Administration. NGOs can also apply for project co-financing at Society Integration Fund, if the project is aimed at enhancing public participation in decision making. In some cases, there exists municipal funding. For example, Riga City council has established a special environmental protection fund that administrates the revenues municipality obtains from natural resource tax. Apart from project based funding, in some municipalities, NGOs can use offices at lower or no rents. NGOs that have obtained public benefit organization status can receive tax rebates. For example, buildings owned by those NGOs are exempted from the real estate tax. Also, enterprises that donate to public benefit organizations receive tax rebates amounting 85% of donated sum.

Themes and activities covered, methods used to reach goals

The most frequently covered themes by NGOs questioned were nature and biodiversity, with sustainable development as the second favorite topic. A few organizations also mentioned water, waste and climate change. The most frequent activity was public awareness raising, with education coming second and policy assessment third. A majority of NGOs used policy working groups to achieve their results. This comes as no surprise as these NGO were also the target group of the survey. Consultations with public authorities and participation in public hearings are also relatively widely used. However, according to respondents in Latvia, “negative” activities such as protest actions, boycotts, petitions or filing law suits are practically never used to achieve NGO goals.

How NGOs are organized

Since 2003 at the end of each year the Ministry of the Environment organizes meeting for environmental NGOs and professional associations, where it presents the main accomplishments of the year and priorities for the next year. NGOs are presenting their achievements

and topical issues, as well as work performed by environmental advisory board. This meeting is usually attended by 80-100 participants.

The main NGO fora and means to be involved in the environmental policy is the Environmental Advisory Board under the Ministry of the Environment. This Advisory Board consists of 19 NGO representatives elected each year by NGOs themselves and approved by the Minister of Environment. The Advisory Board meets approximately once a month and reviews legislative proposals and discuss other topical issues. Within the Advisory Board there are several thematic working groups that specialize in reviewing issues concerning water protection, biodiversity, energy, environment policy integration and other. NGO representatives in these working groups are voluntarily nominated and working group topics may change from year to year depending on the current policy issues.

Belonging to international coalitions and networks is also widespread among Latvian NGOs. NGO Respondents mentioned membership to such coalitions and networks as European Environmental Bureau, Central and Eastern European Network, Planta Europa, BirdLife International, AVALON,¹¹ IFOAM,¹² ANPED,¹³ Global Water Partnership and Unitas Malacologica.

Judging from responses, it seems that participating in advisory boards established by different ministries is an important mechanism to participate in environmental policy development and implementation. Indeed, an important number of advisory boards were mentioned by respondents: environment advisory board under the Ministry of the Environment, Environmental Protection Fund, forest advisory board under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forest Development Fund, Hunting Development Fund advisory board, advisory boards for four river basin districts (Lielupe, Daugava, Gauja and Venta), advisory boards for special protected areas (Ķemeru national park, Gauja national park, Slītere national park, North Vidzeme biosphere reserve, Lubāna wetlands consultative board) as well as advisory boards for established for development of nature protection plans for special protected areas (Añce wetland, Pape, Krēmeri, Seda). NGOs are also

participating in advisory boards for specific activities like Baltic angler's organisation and working groups for specific problematic issues such as working group on energy base loads and working group on excise tax reliefs under the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Several nature protection organizations mentioned participation in the Rural Development Programme and participation in related legislation development, enhancing integration of biodiversity interests into rural development plans as particularly effective.

Lithuania

Main environmental issues and environmental policy

The institution responsible for development and implementation of the environmental policy in Lithuania is the Ministry of the Environment.

According to its strategic outlines 2007, the main activities of the Ministry are concentrated on the following environmental goals: finally introduce reliable waste registering and accounting system, finish construction of 4 regional waste landfills; implement properly EU Water Framework Directive, develop Baltic Sea protection strategy, develop legal framework for implementation of Kyoto Protocol, increase forest areas, and further implement biodiversity protection activities and means. The Ministry has an Advisory Board where the environmental networking NGO's has a place. Since 2007 the board has had representatives of Environmental NGO's coalition and Lithuanian Green Movement. In general NGO's have legal basis to be involved in policy and legislation development, all strategies and legislation drafts are placed on internet with reasonable time limit to provide comments. The problem is that NGO's are too busy with implementation of their projects or they do not have culture to take a proactive role in participation of legislation drafting and implementation.

The Lithuanian Green Party was established in 1989, but it has never held any seats in Parliament.

¹¹ International, nonprofit organisation active in the field of sustainable rural development

¹² International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements

¹³ Northern Alliance for Sustainability whose main focus is sustainable production and consumption

Legal framework for NGO participation

The rights for NGO participation in decision making are ensured by the following laws:

- Environmental protection Law¹⁴ gives citizens and NGOs opportunities to participate in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as well as Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment (SEI) procedures.
- Environmental Impact Assessment Law¹⁵ provides possibilities for citizens and NGOs participate in discussion on EIA as well as initiation of EIA right. Secondary legislation under EIA law provides more précised obligations for EIA organizers to inform and provide opportunities for NGOs and general public participation.
- Law on Territorial planning¹⁶ provides legal framework for public and NGOs participation in decision making process on land use changes. According the law, the plan developers have a mandatory consultation with general public before the new activities in particular territory can be implemented.
- Construction Law¹⁷ includes obligation for constructors to inform the general public when starting construction with objectives public importance. The list of these buildings are approved by the Government.
- Law on Regional Development¹⁸ considers NGOs as social economic partners and requires to consult them during development of regional development plans.
- Law on regulation for development of legal acts¹⁹ states that the general public has a right to provide comments, suggestions concerning the draft law or secondary legal act. The draft version is to be published on the Internet 15 days in advance of its discussion at the Parliament.

14 2004-04-13, No. I-2223 version of the last changes 2005-03-24

15 2005-06-21, No. X-258

16 2004-01-15, IX-1962, version of the last amendment 2007-03-22

17 2001-11-08, No. IX-583, version of the last amendment 2007-05-19

18 2002-12-10, No. IX-1285, version of the last amendment 2007-06-02

19 1995-05-02, No. I-872, version of the last amendment 2006-12-12

- Law on public administration²⁰ requires public administration to consult NGOs, associations, labor unions in decision making process when the decisions have a dimension of importance for the public.
- Statute of the Parliament²¹ states that draft legal acts are discussed in the Committees of the Parliament. The committees have a right to invite for discussion NGOs, experts of representatives of the society.
- Work regulation of the Government²² states that drafts of Government decisions are placed on internet site www.lrv.lt. The general public and NGOs have a right to make comments and send them directly to the Prime minister's office.

NGO situation description

Lithuanian environmental NGOs are currently in a transition period. Since 1991 many various donors have operated in Lithuania with aim of supporting NGO's projects and their development.

Some Lithuanian environmental NGOs try to achieve their goals by holding demonstrations and protest actions, organizing conferences, exhibitions, camps, lobbying governmental officials, collecting and dissemination of information. Some environmental NGOs (Lithuanian green movement, Lithuanian ornithological society) have also become members of international organizations and are beginning to be active at the international arena. The leaders of the biggest groups organize meetings to exchange information and facilitate the communal decision-making. On the other hand, smaller NGOs are not able to have a wider or more substantial impact on the society and the environment due to the lack of technical capacity, limited knowledge and scarce funds available. It should be noted that EU funding programmes encouraged development of so called community based organizations (CBO) and Local Action Groups. Some of these groups are still active and have an impact on local decision-making level; some

20 2006-06-27, No. X-736, version of the last amendment 2007-01-18

21 1998 12 22, No. VIII-1000, version of the last amendment 2007-06-26

22 1994-08-11 No. 728, version of the last amendment 2007-07-04

seems were established for one project only or were active depending on the leader activeness and are not active for current period.

In the past years capacities and activities of environmental NGOs has weakened due to the funds reallocation. Some donors left Lithuania as for example Soros International Foundation and USAID as it is supposed that Lithuania has reached the appropriate level of democracy, which is true, but it does not mean that the society has become richer or more capable. On the contrary, the lack of funding makes people focus on earning a living and thus fewer possibilities are left for the technical implementation of environmental projects.

Themes and activities covered, methods used to reach goals

The most frequently covered environmental issues by Lithuanian NGOs are nature and biodiversity, with waste issues being the second most popular topic. A few organizations also mentioned sustainable development and water. The most frequent activity covered was public awareness raising, with information dissemination coming in second and capacity building third. A majority of NGOs surveyed in Lithuania used media campaigns and public hearings to achieve their results. It could be explained by the fact that NGOs are mainly choosing positive/neutral activities. Consultations with public authorities and participation in public hearings are also relatively widely used. However, “negative” activities such as protest actions, boycotts, petitions or filing law suits are practically never used to achieve NGO goals.

How NGOs are organized

There are two main umbrella environmental organizations which are active and recognized by the state institutions: Lithuanian Green Movement and Coalition of Environmental NGOs. These two organizations have seats on important steering committees like EU Structural support and Sustainable Development Strategy committee, advisory board at the Ministry of the Environment. The Lithuanian Green Movement joins five organizations: “Atgaja” community, Siauliai Cultural and Nature heritage protection club “Aukuras”, ecological club “Zvejone”, Vilnius ecological club “Zemyna” and Pilaite local community. There are seven Members of the Environmental Coalition : Baltic Environmental Forum,

“Atgaja” community, Lithuanian Ornithological Society; Water house, Environmental Centre for Administration and Technology, Lithuanian Fund for Nature and Environmental Information Centre.

Lithuanian NGO’s are also members of the main international organizations: Friends of the Earth-International (FoEI), Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB), CEE Bankwatch Network, International Network for Sustainable Energy (INforSE), Climate Action Network (CAN), Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Bird Life International, World Conservation Union (IUCN), Eurosite, European Environmental Bureau, European Union for Coastal Conservation (EUCC), Keep Baltic Tidy (KBT).

Experience with policy lobbying, policy development and implementation

At the national level, it is usually national umbrella organizations that are invited to different steering committees and working groups. Lithuanian Green Movement and Environmental NGO coalition has seats on the Steering Committee for preparation for EU Structural support implementation, Advisory Board for Ministry of Environment. Lithuanian Green Movement has seats in Commission for Sustainable Development and GMO steering committee.

NGOs are mainly active in development and promotion of secondary legislation. This is due to the fact that framework environmental legislation is mainly influenced by EU environmental policy. For instance, NGO coalitions have positions on the register of biodiversity habitats, waste management, GMO, water management. These positions are promoted by public statements, lobbying activities as well as through different working groups where the Coalition members have seats. Lithuanian Green Movement has a clear position concerning forest and cultural heritage management. Lithuanian Fund for Nature took a position concerning implementation of agro-environmental measures.

Public institutions including the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture know active NGOs and their positions. In the process of drafting various legal acts NGOs are invited to drafting working groups and they are asked to present their positions.

Russia

Main environmental issues and environmental policy

Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation has a responsibility for development and implementation of the environmental policy in Russia. The Ministry is a federal executive body performing functions related to state policy formulation and normative and legal regulation in the spheres of conservation of natural resources, the use and conservation of water resources, the use, conservation, and protection of the forests, the use of wildlife resources and specially protected natural areas, as well as in the sphere of environmental conservation. To reach these aims, the Ministry has special agencies and services – the Federal Subsoil Resources Management Agency, Federal Forestry Agency, Federal Water Resources Agency and Federal Supervisory Natural Resources Management Service.²³ Technical regulation concerning environmental pollution is regulated by a separated body – the Federal Service of Technical Regulation.

In Russia, the Ecological Doctrine of Russian Federation (ECRF) adopted by the decision of the Government in 2002 states the necessity for development and implementation of the national environmental policy aiming at environmental protection and efficient use of natural resources. ECRF defines the goals, objectives, tasks and principles of long-term national environmental policy. ECRF names the main environmental issues and the objectives. Under the ECRF, the Ministry of Natural Resources has developed a special Action Plan for Implementation of the Ecological Doctrine for 2003-2005. This Plan demands preparation of regional documents (action plans) in line with the federal one. However, these activities were not followed up in recent years.

Referring to North-West Russia, the regions (subjects of the Russian Federation) are allowed to have own environmental policies. In St.Petersburg such policy exists in the draft document “Main directions of St.Petersburg policies in the field of environmental protection and ensuring environmental security for 2003-2007.” In the coming year it will be available for comment at the official website of City Government. In the Pskov region

there is a “Programme of economic and social development of Pskov region for 2006-2010”, partially addressing environmental issues. Leningrad region has several relevant documents for the environmental field: the regional targeted programme “Environmental Protection in Leningrad region for 2004-2006”, regional targeted programme “Development and Use of Mineral Resources of Leningrad region in 2006-2010” and the regional targeted programme “Support and Development of the Specially Protected Areas in Leningrad region until 2010.”

Legal framework for NGO participation

Russia has NOT ratified the Aarhus Convention,²⁴ which regulates access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters.

There is not any special document about NGOs or public participation in decision-making process on the national level in Russia so the major provisions are placed in different legal acts, which could be grouped into four major blocks:

The first type of legal acts is regulating general rights of NGO/public participation in decision-making process – the corner stone here is the Constitution of the Russian Federation,²⁵ and some other national laws. Main principles of environmental protection and activities are regulated by the Federal Environment Protection law of the Russian Federation (No. 7, 10.01.2002, art.3) which include “participation of citizens, public associations and other non-profit organizations in environmental decision-making process.”²⁶ Principle of publicity, NGO participation and expression of public opinion is the basis of Environmental Expertise law, which includes a description of the environmental expertise concept, principles and procedure, rights of involving people and NGOs as well as responsibility for the result (No. 174, 23.11.1995, par.1).

²³ <http://www.mnr.gov.ru/?pid=398> – site of Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation

²⁴ Status of this document by that moment: signed but don't ratified by Russia

²⁵ General rights of public participation are prescribed in art. 3, 29, 31, 32, 33

²⁶ Rights and main charges of non-profit organizations in the sphere of environment – at paragraph 3 of this document (art.12)

The second type of acts regulates special forms and methods of NGO participation. For example, there are special laws about information access and about Referendum procedure in the Russian Federation etc.

The third block is sector-wise legislation regulating different environmental issues like Water Code or Forest Code, where some specific references are given concerning NGOs and public actions in these particular areas.

The fourth type of law is a special NGOs legal framework such as recent Federal Law On Non-Profit Organizations regulating NGOs registration, forms of non-governmental organizations, rules of NGO reorganization and liquidation, and relevant state control over NGOs activities. In general this law introduced more strict requirements towards registrations and NGO functioning, as well as imposed additional bureaucracy activities such as extra reporting and information submission.

NGO rights have very declarative character, but in real life these rights are often limited. For example, people and NGOs have a right to give their own observations to public authorities but this is acting only on the level of recommendations - authorities are not required to take their opinion into account. In addition, officials do not have to give reasons why public recommendations or demands are not considered. This approach means the absence of clear mechanisms of direct NGO influence on any environmental policy-related processes.

NGO situation description

It is not easy to determine exactly how many NGOs are functioning at this moment due to the fact that many organizations are nominally registered, but not working. In general, the numbers are quite impressive. For example, the data from 2006 (given by Federal Department of Saint-Petersburg and Leningrad region) shows that by 01.07.2006 there were 6581 NGOs in Saint-Petersburg.²⁷ Many of these were registered in the democracy boom in Russia, but were never active and only still exist because, they are not yet formally unregistered. Partly such deviation between the number of the de jure existence and the number of actually functioning organizations

can also be explained by the practice of registering several juridical bodies for the needs of one group of people. A registered but inactive NGO may act as a fall-back for the leaders of another organization.

NGO capacities in North-West Russia are rather low – there are deficit of finances, people and technical potential. The overwhelming majority of organizations have minimal staff (3-4 persons). Though, most organizations are clear about development strategy. Their leaders see future steps of the organization and have high qualification and experience to solve operative tasks. But even the most active and successful NGOs have minimum staff of permanent employees and minimum finances for their work which narrows down their activities and forces to delve in solving small individual tasks.

NGOs in Russia undertake independent research work funded by research bodies and foundations as well as commissioned projects for a range of sponsors, including the EU institutions, government ministries of the other countries, environmental agencies and non-governmental organizations in a range of countries. As non-profit, independent organizations, NGO work is predominantly based on the program and project funding. The main sources of financing for NGO activities are grants on different levels (regional, inter-regional, federal, and international). Membership fees are usually not significant.

Main NGO funders in North-West Russia include Nordic Council of Ministers, The European Commission, Environmental Protection Agencies of border countries – Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark. Quite a few activities are also funded by consulates and embassies, for example, by the USA and the UK. In the last few years financial support from the government is increasing for NGOs in Russia. During the last two years NGOs can receive grants from the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation²⁸ in the sphere of education, science, culture, environment, social sphere and medicine.

²⁷ http://www.soc-spb.ru/2006/Report_2007.pdf Information and analytical report about NGO at Saint-Petersburg in 2006 made by NGO Development Center (Saint-Petersburg).

²⁸ <http://www.oprf.ru/rus>. Official site of Common Chamber of Russian Federation

Themes and activities covered, methods used to reach goals

Major topics of NGO activities are biodiversity and environmental protection, sustainable development, waste, water, and health issues. Air pollution, chemicals and biotechnology are also considered, but not on the regular basis. Strong focus on environmental protection and biodiversity is quite traditional as the oldest environmental NGOs in St.Petersburg, Society of Naturalists, was aimed at geography and environmental studies. New, "exotic" topics like climate changes are starting to be more and more important for NGO activities in the last few years.

Preferred methods are information dissemination, public awareness and capacity building. These methods could probably be regarded as conventional ones. In addition, consultations and expertise are also important and reflects the rather high professionalism of many environmental NGOs in NW Russia. Environmental education is also among common methods which are widely used for different target groups and sectors. Environmental policy analysis and lobbying is still weak and has not been used by many NGOs.

How NGOs are organized

Environmental NGOs in North-West region are quite known to each other. However, it does not mean that most organizations are ready cooperating and create common coalition. In general, there is a tendency for cooperation and strengthening, but there is still a need for more communication and partnership. For example, there is a roundtable of NGOs in St.Petersburg and Leningrad, but it does not cover all NW Russia.

Internet-based network of environmental organizations is functioning at North-West region.²⁹ Ecological North West Line (ENWL) is not only an NGO network since it includes also journalists and researchers. ENWL is aimed at public debates, information distribution, discussions among different stakeholders and environmental awareness rising.

Many NGOs are a part of different international groups and networks. For example, there are organizations which are members of such international networks as International

Green Cross organization,³⁰ International Socio-Ecological Union,³¹ Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), WWF etc.

NGOs in North-West Russia are usually concentrated in the centre of regions. It can be explained by the aspiration for cooperation with resource centers at these cities and its resources. For example, NGO Development Center at Saint-Petersburg,³² render assistance for NGO's who work on environment, education, science, culture in all North-West Russia. The aim of this organization is development of a civil society in Russia, civil initiatives supporting and rising the quality of life in NW Russia. Each region of North-West Russia has its own Resource Center for NGO that supports NGOs. For example, in Pskov region there two such bodies, Center for social protecting "Vozroждение"³³ and Center for civil initiative support "Uchastie."³⁴

²⁹ <http://www.enwl.net.ru/> site of Ecological North West Line NGO network.

³⁰ <http://www.gci.ch> - International Green Cross site, <http://www.green-cross.ru/about.html> - Green cross at Russia

³¹ <http://www.seu.ru/member> - site of Socio-Ecological Union

³² <http://www.cmo.ru/document.asp?key=directions> - site of NGO Development Center at Saint-Petersburg

³³ <http://www.ngo.pskovregion.org/> - site of Centre for social protecting "Vozroждение"

³⁴ <http://ngo.pskov.ru/supportcenter/> - site of Centre for civil initiative support "Uchastie"

Ukraine

Main environmental issues and environmental policy

Anthropogenic pressure on the environment in Ukraine exceeds by several times that in developed countries and continues to increase. Life expectancy in Ukraine on average is about 66 years (in Sweden - 80, in Poland - 74 years). Poor environmental quality is a significant cause of Ukraine's health problems, in particular from mining, metallurgical and chemical industry and energy sector. Ukraine has the highest levels of erosion, consumption of water resources and deforestation in Europe. About 15 % of the territory which hosts more than 10 million inhabitants is in a critical ecological condition. The density of emissions of polluting substances in atmospheric air recently averaged at 130 kg per capita, which several times exceeds a corresponding parameter in developed countries.

The lack of an environmental control system, slow structural reforms, poor technological modernization, and support for older, less effective approaches to power and natural resources in Ukraine's growing economy has led to increased pollution. Ukraine was in the 110th place out of 122 countries according to the index of sustainable development in 2001.

The only legal document which currently defines environmental policy and strategy in Ukraine is the decision of the Ukrainian Parliament from 1998 "About the basic directions of a state policy of Ukraine in sphere of the environmental protection, use of natural resources and maintenance of ecological safety".

In many ways this document is still urgently needed, but it is no longer a complete policy of environmental protection. Since 1998, ecological strategy has been defined at the international level and events in Ukraine have helped with direction and strengthening of economic activities. NGOs feel the low priority of environmental policy has caused the current environmental crisis.

In "The Public assessment of environmental policy in Ukraine", NGOs claim that the condition of the environment in Ukraine is a threat to national safety, and that the government system in sphere of the environment protection is institutionally not capable of changing the situation. Ukraine is the only country in Europe besides Albania which has

not adopted an Environmental Action Plan and one of few countries which does not have a Strategy of Sustainable Development.

Legal framework for NGO participation

Legislation provides the right of public access to environmental information. In 1999 Ukraine ratified the Aarhus Convention "On Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice Environmental Matters" being, alongside with national legislations, a basis of activity for environmental NGOs and legal base for relations with authorities.

The public right to the information is provided by the laws of Ukraine "About the information" and "About the reference of citizens". The right of the public to participation in decision-making in Ukraine also is provided by the law "About environmental examination". However, participation of the public in decision-making is still limited.

NGO situation description

The Public in Ukraine rarely participates in discussion of local budgets, development of long-term plans of development of areas and cities, and could participate more during planning of sustainable development. The public is also insufficiently involved in decision-making on river basin management. In general it is necessary to improve mechanisms participation for NGOs to operate effectively in Ukraine.

How many NGOs there are in a country and how many deal with environment

During a public meeting with the President of World Bank G. Wolfson in 2000, the head of the Center of Innovations and Developments Mr O. Sidorenko has said that "The official data of State Statistic Goskomstat in 1998 indicates that Ukrainian NGOs received the equivalent of 120 million US dollars from internal Ukrainian, and in 1999 - 61 million US dollars, including 7,7 million USD - from the state budget."

The difference is explained not by any cataclysms in the third sector (there were presidential elections in 1999 and even more costly parliamentary elections in 1998).

In general any figures referring to “the third sector” and “civil society” in Ukraine should be perceived with care. In particular, existence of 46,5 thousand public organizations, which makes one organizations for each one thousand people, on the average about eighty organizations per administrative area. The Ministry of Justice in 2006 could not even find 73 registered the All-Ukrainian organizations. The most extensive the e-mailing list of environmental NGOs, contains only 5000 organizations of an environmental orientation.

Experience with policy lobbying, policy development and implementation

Ukrainian NGOs persistently lobbying governmental decisions to increase of efficiency of environmental policy, increase participation in development, and encourage discussion of national and regional legislative acts. They also research legislation relating to the economy, various branches of the government and environmental policy. NGOs initiate public and parliamentary hearings and critically analyze national strategic documents.

For example, in 2006 a number of public organizations conducted “the Critical analysis of substantive provisions of the ‘Energy strategy of Ukraine for the period until 2030’” and also “The Concept of ‘non-nuclear’ development of energy in Ukraine.”

After the orange revolution, Ukrainian NGOs addressed the president of Ukraine with open letters about the prioritization of environmental policy twice. The Letter to the president of Ukraine, in which the Society demands effective ecological policy in 2005 was signed by 125 Ukrainian public environmental organizations.

How NGOs are organized

Ukrainian NGOs are often united in thematic and situational coalitions, extensive networks, and in various Public Councils.

Conclusions

From the results this project and investigations, we can conclude that NGOs are willing to contribute to the policy process, but they are often lacking mechanisms and capacities for effective influence. However, the details of the situation differ from country to country.

Unsurprisingly for the project team, limitations or “no-go-areas” were mentioned mostly in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, Military and State security are “closed” areas in all three countries. Other state affairs, like policy development and inspection, i.e. observing law enforcement might be also difficult to be involved in. “No-go-areas” were also understood not only as fields where NGOs are not welcome, but also as sectors where NGOs would not like to enter, for example, business-related activities where most NGOs are not willing to profit from “non-environmental” activities or get funding from the business which is not environmentally-sound.

Future development is seen differently from NGO’s and authorities perspectives. While authorities are willing to see NGOs as public educators or information dissemination channels, NGOs themselves are eager to be a player in other areas as well – both trying to intervene the policy process and take concrete environmental measures in other directions. This point should be carefully considered while talking about the future – different expectations from both sides could be a cause for misunderstanding.

NGOs see their future as a “road map” leading many different directions. This “road map” was discussed at the NGO conference and the summary below is based on expert opinion of participating NGOs. It is of course self-oriented as it is clear that in most cases NGOs are supported by NGOs – thus in this area future activities could be NGOs capacity building aimed at their own functions (fundraising skills etc.) leading to overall organizational sustainability. Another issue, mentioned by NGO representatives was strategy development and common strategies for networks. This clearly shows the need for more of a programming approach because most NGOs are funded primarily by project based funding which leads to inconsistent operations and unclear policies. The same applies to the networks.

This programming approach is also a concern external actions, not just aimed at their own stability. Here NGOs wish to move from “pilot” actions towards programming and wider influence. It might be a result of project-based experience where a lot of pilot actions performed by NGOs are still in the experimental stage and now ready to be distributed – so NGOs would see the need to have broader operational scope and higher visibility for their actions.

The next area for future actions is capacity building for public authorities in order to establish a common base for joint actions and have higher motivation for environmental activities among different stakeholders.

As for the new areas of intervention, NGOs see a window of opportunity for opening new sensitive areas, for example, covering “white spots” which are insufficiently exploited by the state or other actors. NGOs may also be used to close “gaps” in state administration - i.e. the areas where state actors are either not active or we do not see their direct engagement. In addition, NGOs are willing to challenge the “no-go-areas” mentioned above.

As a side-effect of this cooperative project among NGOs from six countries there was a very positive chance to network the actors and facilitate their dialogue. For NGOs from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine it is encouraging for their every-day activities to exchange information and experience with colleagues from neighboring countries who were having a common past, but benefit from further developed democracy in their countries. It was highlighted that this network should be kept together and expanded to an action forum in the future with direct interactions at regional level.

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Annex I: Interview Results

| 35

To get a picture of the situation and standing for NGOs in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, 30 interviews were carried out with individuals mostly from state institutions, media and NGOs resource centers or foundations. Interviews were conducted personally or via phone covering the following questions given below in the template.

Interview template in English and Russian

1	Personal information: Name, Organizational affiliation, Position, Educational background, Age, Gender	Личная информация: Имя, организация, должность, образование, возраст, пол
2	What are your organization tasks in environmental policy development implementation/enforcement?	Каковы функции Вашей организации в сфере развития/внедрения/укрепления экологической политики?
3	Whom you consider as important environmental policy actors/groups on different levels (national, regional, local)?	Кто по вашему мнению является ключевыми действующими лицами /группами в области экологической политики на различных уровнях(национальный, региональный местный)?
4	Why do you think these actors are important? If this importance is varying for policy development,/implementation/enforcement processes? [if NGOs are not mentioned]- please, explain why?	Почему данные действующие лица /организации являются важными? Изменяется ли их значительность на разных стадиях экологической политики – разработки, внедрения, оценки? [если НКО не упоминаются]- объясните, почему?
5	Do you think that NGOs should be influential on the political level (in general)? Give reasons for your answer?	Думаете ли Вы, что НКО должны иметь влияние на политику в целом? Пожалуйста, объясните свою позицию.
6	Which NGOs acting in the field of the environmental policy processes do you know? Please, name them.	Какие неправительственные организации, действующие в сфере экологической политики, Вы знаете? Назовите их.
7	What do you know about their activities?	Что Вы знаете об их деятельности?
8	How would you describe the current role of NGOs in environmental policy process? Should it be changed or not?	Как Вы можете описать современную роль НКО в процессе экологической политики? Должна ли она меняться или нет?
9	Which areas are not appropriate for NGOs activities? Why?	Какие сферы не подходят для действий НКО? Почему?
10	Do you know who's financing NGOs activities? Should the state be involved in it as well?	Что Вы знаете об источниках финансирования для НКО? Должно ли государство финансировать НКО?
11	How to measure the efficiency of NGO's participation in EP processes? What criteria and methods could be helpful?	Как измерить эффективность деятельности НКО в сфере экологической политики? Какие критерии и методы могут быть использованы?
12	What could you advise for raising their effectiveness?	Что Вам хотелось бы посоветовать НПО для повышения эффективности их деятельности?

Question	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Whom you consider as important environmental policy actors/groups on different levels (national, regional, local)?	Descending influence in the following order: State institutions, economy/private sector, NGOs	State institutions and NGOs (only present on the national level) are mentioned	State institutions and NGOs
Why do you think these actors are important? If this importance is varying for policy development, implementation/enforcement processes?	State institutions have the given legislative and executive powers; Economy has the financial power; NGOs are participating in law-making procedures, and act as watch dogs in the implementation with a (theoretically) huge public backing	NGOs politically most active in policy development but less active in implementation (only interviewee from parliament has an opposite view)	These actors are responsible for all processes with regard to environmental policy Development, implementation and enforcement
[if NGOs are not mentioned]- please, explain why? Do you think that NGOs should be influential on the political level (in general)? Give reasons for your answer?	NGOs should be (even) more influential on the political level, they should give the broad society a stronger voice	A balance of powers and forces is preferred by all respondents; NGOs should have their share, but should not explicitly be more influential	NGOs should be more influential in terms of drawing public attention to problems, but also developing environmental legislation on national and EU level
What do you know about their activities?	The activities are quite well known All environmental fields are covered, Practically their activities cover mainly, information dissemination, awareness raising, and practical environmental actions (building of trails, cleaning after occurred pollution, etc.)	Not much said about concrete actions, yet there is a notion of local groups being more active in "field-work" and the majority of national NGOs being more active in strategic planning, information dissemination	Educational, awareness raising; Some lobbying; Representing particular interest groups
How would you describe the current role of NGOs in environmental policy process? Should it be changed or not?	If active, they are doing some lobbying for law changes (but this should be done much more), internally they should not so much bother about persons, but ideas	They are quite open for compromises, give input to development of environmental legislation	NGOs in Lithuania are not very active, even weak. Yet, there is no State policy or strategy how to deal with NGOs and how to support them (financially) in the long-term.
Which areas are not appropriate for NGOs activities? Why?	There are no no-go areas for NGOs	There are no no-go areas in Latvia for NGOs what concerns the topics, the limitations are rather seen as determined by lacking capacities, and NGOs should neither be allegiant to a political party or duplicate the work of state institutions	No-go areas do not exist Singular mentioning of "monitoring and lab work"
Do you know who's financing NGOs activities? Should the state be involved in it as well?	Project based national and international funding State funding should remain (some say even increase)	Project based national and international funding; international funding is seen as difficult because many NGOs do not have sufficient administrative capacities and qualities	Project based funding and the state should be more involved in their support and develop a more coherent policy to support NGOs
What could you advise for raising their effectiveness?	Raise capacities and gain more information Be more stable in their opinions Be more active in political processes (lobbying)	Raise their capacities and become more active in involving the public	Mainly this question was not answered NGOs should join forces and raise their capacities
Conclusions	Estonian NGOs are either explicitly judged as being less influential or mentioned last, which speaks of their standing NGOs play (if they do) a fairly traditional role in Estonia, yet the responses give the impression that they are somehow known, but not necessarily considered as a serious actor Practically every sphere is accessible for NGOs, yet they are seen as lacking capacities and being inconsistent in their own policies (opinions)	Latvian NGOs appear to be "nice guys" who are good in co-operation with state institutions and are not so good in drawing public attention to real problems. They are facing no constraints in terms of scope for action, yet they are lacking capacities and thus are not seen as an very important political actor Lack of capacities also mean lack of access to finances	Lithuanian NGOs appear not to be publicly present, they do not face any obstacles in terms of no-go areas, yet these are determined by capacities and financial resources

Belarus	Russia	Ukraine	Conclusions
<p>Almost exclusively state institutions (only 1 mentioning of NGOs)</p> <p>They have the factual power to make and influence political developments NGOs are once mentioned as source of political processes: awareness raising</p>	<p>Mainly state institutions, although powers are widely scattered among different bodies. NGOs are almost not mentioned at all.</p> <p>State institutions have limited power. Generally environmental actors are not seen as influential at all in the political arena in Russia (changing responsibilities, changing opinions and changing influence). There is no evaluation of environmental policy occurring in Russia</p>	<p>Economy, State institutions, science, NGOs and social interest groups.</p> <p>State institutions have legally given powers (regardless of factual influence); Economy is the financially strongest interested group facing a corrupted state easy to guide; Science brings problems to light and NGOs do evaluation of environmental policy</p>	<p>With the exception of Russia and Ukraine State institutions are seen as most influential in all countries, and NGOs are clearly a weak actor</p> <p>State institutions have variously strong legal powers to influence policy Economy has financial power</p>
<p>NGOs do not have any access to politically influential structures, and run into the danger of jeopardising their organisational existence when going into conflict with state organs (except for where it is legally required (desired): Aarhus Convention, Nature conservation; However, generally, as integral element of a democratic society they should have influence</p>	<p>Currently NGOs are not relevant; all respondents support a stronger influence of NGOs especially in the field of policy development</p>	<p>For the current situation no role is really mentioned for NGOs, however all agree that it should change. They should be more influential, should do more awareness raising in public and state and have more access an potentials to really influence policy making However this is currently not yet possible in Ukraine, as mentioned by one respondent</p>	<p>NGOs are currently not very active and present on the political scene This situation should be changed in all countries towards more influence for NGOs on policy development</p>
<p>First of all educational, scientific/informational activities are mentioned. Furthermore their activities cover some vague political activities in law-making</p>	<p>None of the respondents can really say something precise, all refer to general terms, yet some mentioning of some educational, public awareness raising activities</p>	<p>Not much precise is answered. One respondent points out that they are ephemeral and lack long-term strategies</p>	<p>Except for Estonia, the activities of NGOs are not very present to respondents</p>
<p>Without NGOs people would know even less about the environment. The responses range from "no role" to "primarily information dissemination"; It is clearly stated by all that their role should change and that they should get more involved in dialogue between social and political actors.</p>	<p>Generally they are representing a wider public opinion. One outstanding answer sees them as the guarantee of environmental policy in Russia, since state organs appear and disappear</p>	<p>Principally NGOs have a clear role in influencing development of legislation, yet this is not yet sufficiently exploited. All agree that they should be more influential in this field.</p>	<p>For all countries NGOs are a major source of delivering information to the public about environmental issues, yet further activities (like influencing policy, activating the public to request for changes in policy or to solve a problem) are currently very rarely occurring</p>
<p>Principally there are not many spheres for NGOs. Mainly those which are not open by law. Lack of trust from state institutions</p>	<p>They exist, those explicitly mentioned focus on spheres of security and defence policy which is an exclusive state owned area</p>	<p>If they exist, then in the field of defence and security (although by far more vaguely expressed as in the Russian case). All agree, that in principle there should be no no-go areas for NGOs</p>	<p>Baltic States: No politically set No-go areas Belarus: Scope appears to be quite limited, but difficult to assess from interviews Russia and Ukraine, they do exist, but are also not clearly identified yet</p>
<p>Foreign funds (very rare cases of national funding) usually on project basis. With one exception all respondents support more (national) state funding</p>	<p>Project based funding. With one exception all respondents support a national state funding to be established</p>	<p>Mainly international funding (grants); A partial financing of NGO activities through the state is generally accepted (subsistence funding) on a clear legal basis</p>	<p>Project based funding, mainly international. Baltic State have state funding; Russia, Belarus' and Ukraine: Very difficult for state funding. National state funding for future is supported in all countries</p>
<p>Raise capacities and Be (even) more active. Collaboration with media and co-operate with other NGOs</p>	<p>Raise capacities and be more active in involving the public; NGOs should join forces be more tough towards the state.</p>	<p>Raise their capacities, be more active in involving the public, be more honest and stable in standing in for their opinions</p>	<p>Lack of capacities is the major challenge for NGOs in the whole region Very limited potential to involve (attract the public) for action Need for more co-operation among NGOs</p>
<p>Belorussian NGOs lack room to manoeuvre, mainly due to politically unfavourable structures and lack of capacities Yet, they are important information disseminators to the public. It is not yet fully clear how narrow the scope is, because answers to no-go-areas were very vague, this should be assessed more deeply in the questionnaire From the interviews it is also not clear what role finances play for the performance</p>	<p>In Russia it is not clear who is weaker: the NGOs or the environmental administration; here clearly the weakest is the environment itself. There are constraints for scope, as the field of defence and security is a very, very widely interpreted term in Russian politics and can be nearly applied in any other policy field. Also here NGOs need to raise their capacities. Generally, the perception of NGOs in Russia appears to be the most unfavourable or least optimistic</p>	<p>Also in the Ukraine the state institutions are not necessarily seen as the strongest actors, here economy (oligarchic structures) are mentioned, and quite a wide range of other social actors including NGOs</p>	

Questionnaire about the performance of non-governmental environmental organisations in former Soviet Union countries under EU project “NGO potential for contribution to environmental policy development “

Dear Madam, dear Sir!

We kindly ask you to spare some time to answer this questionnaire. Please, read the questions carefully and answer spontaneously! Tick only one answer unless otherwise stated explicitly. We would like to assure you that the information provided will be treated confidentially. It will not be possible to trace back the origin from the results.

1. Information about your organisation

- ¹¹⁰ When was your organisation founded? Month/Year (MM/YYYY) _____ / _____
- ¹²⁰ When was your organisation registered? Month/Year (MM/YYYY) _____ / _____
- ¹³⁰ How many members does your organisation have? Amount: _____
- ¹⁴⁰ How many people are regularly employed in your organisation? Amount: _____

¹⁵⁰ To what extent have the following issues been covered by your activities in the past two years?

	(1 – very rarely, 5 very frequently)	Not at all	1	2	3	4	5
a) Research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Public awareness-raising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Policy-lobbying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Policy assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Information dissemination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Consultation services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Capacity-building on environmental topics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Legal advice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Other (specify): _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

¹⁶⁰ To what extent have the following environmental fields been covered by your activities?

	(1 – very rarely, 5 very frequently)	Not at all	1	2	3	4	5
a) Air	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Biotechnology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Chemicals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Climate change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Industry and Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Nature and Biodiversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Sustainable Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Waste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please, return the questionnaire to:
Organisation, Address, City, Zip, Country, Fax No.

170 To what extent have the following measures been applied in the past two years by your organisation to achieve your goals?

	(1 – very rarely, 5 very frequently)	Not at all	1	2	3	4	5
a) Participation in/support to public hearings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Lobbying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Representation in political working groups/task forces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Consultation for public administration and NGOs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Organising/participation in protest actions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Organising/participation in boycotts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Taking initiative/supporting preparation of petitions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Filing law suites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Organising public cleaning actions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Media campaigns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Organising seminars/conferences/workshops	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Other (specify): _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

180 How many projects did your organisation have in average in the past two years

Duration of the project	Amount of the projects which your organisation has been implementing	Duration of the project	Amount of the projects which your organisation has been implementing
< 3 months	_____	19-24 months	_____
3-6 months	_____	25-36 months	_____
7-12 months	_____	> 36 months	_____
13-18 months	_____		

2. The functioning of your organisation

210 Do you currently have enough human resources to achieve your goals? Yes No

220 Please estimate the share on which basis available human resources are working for your organisation:

Voluntary: _____ % Employed: _____ %

240 How is the gender distribution among your staff?

Male: _____ % Female: _____ %

240 Which are the educational backgrounds of your organisation's staff and estimate their share among your overall share (Tick all applicable)

<input type="checkbox"/> a.) Natural sciences _____ %	<input type="checkbox"/> e.) Social sciences/ Humanities s _____ %
<input type="checkbox"/> b.) Engineering/Technical _____ %	<input type="checkbox"/> f.) Pedagogic/Education _____ %
<input type="checkbox"/> c.) Economic _____ %	<input type="checkbox"/> g.) Administration _____ %
<input type="checkbox"/> d.) Legal _____ %	<input type="checkbox"/> h.) Other: _____ %

²⁵⁰ Please, estimate the share of the roles these human resources take in your organisation's work.

NOTE: Write '0' wherever the role is not filled by a person with the respective background.

	Expert	Management	Co-ordinator	Administration	Education
Natural Scientists	%	%	%	%	%
Engineers	%	%	%	%	%
Economists	%	%	%	%	%
Lawyers	%	%	%	%	%
Social scientists	%	%	%	%	%
Pedagogues	%	%	%	%	%
Administrators	%	%	%	%	%
Other	%	%	%	%	%

²⁶⁰ How do you evaluate the experience of your organisation in the following fields

(1 – no experience, 5 very experienced)

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Project/programme development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Project management/implementation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Financial management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Public appearance and public presentation of results	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Organisation of seminars/workshops/conferences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Content/expertise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Networking with other organizations/partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

²⁷⁰ Every organisation is facing challenges in every day business, please mention to what extent the following challenges apply to your organisation

(1 – Applies fully, 5 Does not apply at all)

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Our organisation is lacking environmental knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Our organisation is lacking management capacities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Our organisation is lacking sufficient funding to keep up operations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Our organisation is lacking human resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Our work is hampered by the bureaucracy and political restrictions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Our organisation is facing a problem to access the necessary information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) There is a general lack of interest among the public for activities of NGO	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Legal restrictions narrow the scope of our activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

May be to add here also "Other (specify)" possibility?

3. Sources and mechanisms of funding of non-governmental organisations in your country

³¹⁰ What is the prevailing type of funding your organisation receive

- Institutional/subsistence funding Project-based funding

³²⁰ To what extent did your organisation receive funding from the following sources for the implementation of its activities in the past two years?

	(1 – very rarely, 5 very frequently)	1	2	3	4	5
National sources						
a.) State budget	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.) Regional budget	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.) Foundations/non-state funds	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.) Business donations/funds	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.) Private individual donations	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
International sources						
f.) International funds (United Nations, World bank, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g.) European Union funds	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h.) Foreign state funds/bilateral cooperation	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i.) Foreign private funds	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k.) Membership fees	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l.) Fees and fines	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m.) Consulting fees	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n.) Other (specify): _____	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

³³⁰ What was your organisation's annual turnover (cash flow through your organisation) in the past two years and what is the estimate for 2007?

2005

<input type="checkbox"/> < 5.000 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 25.000-49.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 250.000-499.000 €
<input type="checkbox"/> 5.000-9.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 50.000-99.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 500.000-999.999 €
<input type="checkbox"/> 10.000-24.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 100.000-249.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> > 1.000.000 €

2006

<input type="checkbox"/> < 5.000 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 25.000-49.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 250.000-499.000 €
<input type="checkbox"/> 5.000-9.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 50.000-99.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 500.000-999.999 €
<input type="checkbox"/> 10.000-24.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 100.000-249.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> > 1.000.000 €

2007 (Estimated)

<input type="checkbox"/> < 5.000 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 25.000-49.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 250.000-499.000 €
<input type="checkbox"/> 5.000-9.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 50.000-99.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 500.000-999.999 €
<input type="checkbox"/> 10.000-24.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> 100.000-249.999 €	<input type="checkbox"/> > 1.000.000 €

4. Environmental policy performance

⁴¹⁰ How do you evaluate the chances for NGOs in general in your country to influence environmental policy on the following levels:

	(1 – Very low chances, 5 – Very high chances)	No chance at all	1	2	3	4	5
a.) On the national/federal level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.) On the regional level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.) On the local level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please, return the questionnaire to:
Organisation, Address, City, Zip, Country, Fax No.

420 Does your organisation aim to influence the environmental policy in your country?

Yes → continue with question 430 No → continue with question 440

430 Which working groups, committees are you participating in, please specify and → continue with question 460

440 We do not participate in such working groups, because ...

(1 Disagree fully – 5 Fully agree)

	1	2	3	4	5
a.) ...policy influence is not the objective of our organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.) ...we fear that interference into politics may jeopardise the existence of our organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.) ...we do not have access to such working groups as NGOs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.) ...although we have access, the voices of NGOs are not taken into account anyway	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.) Other (specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

450 To what extent does your organisation act on the following stages of the environmental policy process?

(1 – Very rarely, 5 – Very frequently)

	Not at all	1	2	3	4	5
a.) Policy formulation/development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.) Policy implementation and enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.) Policy evaluation and monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

460 Are there any “no-go-areas” (i.e. spheres of activity restricted or forbidden for political reasons) in your country for non-governmental organisations?

Yes → continue with question 470 No → continue with question 510

470 Please mention these “no-go-areas” (Tick all applicable)

- a.) Medicine/Health b.) State security c.) Influencing policy-making
 d.) Military e.) Business f.) State control, inspection etc.
 g.) Other (specify): _____

5. Interaction of NGOs with the public administration and legislators

510 Do you think that NGOs receive a fair treatment from state authorities regarding the following issues? Mention to what extent you agree or disagree to the statements

(1 Disagree fully – 5 Fully agree)

	1	2	3	4	5
a.) We can expect a favourable treatment for any kind of administrative procedure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.) In court cases we expect to win a case against state institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.) NGOs are generally treated equally with other players by the judiciary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.) Corruption is the case in many our organizational activities in order to implement them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.) The public administration we have to deal with on a regular basis is cooperative and supportive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f.) Other (specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

⁵²⁰ How do you evaluate the relationship of your organisation with the relevant environmental administrations on the following structural levels?

(1 – Not co-operative at all – 5 Very co-operative) We do not act on this level

		1	2	3	4	5
National level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regional level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

⁵³⁰ To what extent do you agree: would you say that non-governmental organisations in your country in general are considered by authorities as...

(1 Disagree fully – 5 Fully agree)

	1	2	3	4	5
a.) ...partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.) ...instruments for transmission/outreach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.) ...political opposition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.) ...unpleasant duty (to involve them), which is forced by the state regulations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.) Non-governmental organisations and their activities are ignored by the authorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

⁵⁴⁰ Do you think the co-operation between authorities and NGOs is not sufficient? Yes → continue with question 550 No → continue with question 560

⁵⁵⁰ How this cooperation might be improved?
Please, specify

⁵⁶⁰ Are there any legal or fiscal favourable conditions for NGOs in your country?

Yes → continue with question 570 No → continue with question 610

⁵⁷⁰ Which kind of support or favourable conditions for non-governmental organisations exist in your country?

(Tick all applicable)

- Tax exemption
- Possibilities to receive money from convicts, which at court are fined.
- Access to public services or information sources free of charge or for lower rates
- Reduced VAT rates for providing services
- Less or simplified formal procedures compared to profit-making enterprises
- Lower office rents
- Other (specify):
-

6. External relations/means of communication

⁶¹⁰ Which communication channels do you use to make your activities known to the public (tick all applicable)

- Television Newspapers Internet
- Dissemination of flyers Public events Radio
- Other (specify):
-

⁶²⁰ Consider once again the channels of communication listed above and select the order of preference, naming the first three means you have used most successfully in the past:

1st Choice: _____

2nd Choice: _____

Please, return the questionnaire to:
Organisation, Address, City, Zip, Country, Fax No.

3rd Choice: _____

630 Are there any channels that are not accessible for your organisation?

- Television Newspapers Internet
 Dissemination of flyers Public events Word-of-mouth propaganda
 Radio Other: _____

640 To what extent do you receive calls from your target groups or they visit your office to ask for information?

- Daily Every two weeks Semi-annually
 Weekly Monthly We are not contacted by our target group

650 How would you evaluate the outreach of your activities?

- (1) Very successful (2) Successful (3) Average (4) Unsuccessful (5) Not successful at all

660 Considering the impact and the scope of your activities, to what extent would you agree to the following statements

	(1 Disagree fully – 5 Fully agree)				
	1	2	3	4	5
a.) Our organisation is representing not only a single group of stakeholders, but the general public as a whole	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.) Our organisation has a significant basis and is well-known among the general public	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.) With our activities we are able to mobilise social groups, which then participate in public events, manifestations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.) We receive a lot of support from the general public	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.) Our activities are also known beyond the region where we mainly act	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Interaction with other NGOs

710 Do you co-operate with other NGOs? Yes No

720 Is your organisation a member of any national NGO networks? Yes No

730 If yes, please, name them: _____

740 Is your organisation a member of any European/Global NGO networks? Yes No

750 If yes, please, name them: _____

760 If your organisation is a member of a European or international network, to what extent would you agree to the following statements?

	(1 Disagree fully – 5 Fully agree)				
	1	2	3	4	5
a.) Our organisation became a member on the international level to get in touch with colleagues from other countries more easily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.) The membership on an international level has financial benefits for our organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c.) Our organisation can influence more actively EU/global environmental policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.) The membership on the international level has created beneficial synergies with other NGOs for our work/projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.) The membership on the international level has strengthened our performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f.) Participation in the network brings in political safety/backstopping from partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g.) Other (specify): _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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 Organisation, Address, City, Zip, Country, Fax No.

⁷⁷⁰ Does your organisation itself have organisational members?

Yes

No

⁷⁸⁰ If yes how many?

National

Foreign

⁷⁹⁰ If you have foreign members: In which countries?

⁸¹⁰ Please describe the best example of successful policy-influence by NGOs in your country, according to your opinion

Thank you, very much for your participation!

Please, contact national focal points if you have any questions concerning this questionnaire or if you need any clarifications from our side

Organisation

Street, No

Zip, City

Fax

E-mail:

46 | **Annex 3: NGO Conference Report**

**“NGOs in Eastern Europe as actors in development and implementation of the environmental policy - Baltic Sea Action Plan and beyond”
(7-8 Nov. 2007, Jurmala, Latvia)**

Under the EU project “NGO potential for contribution to environmental policy development”

The goal of this event was to contribute towards effectiveness of NGOs participation in environmental policy development and implementation in the Eastern Baltic Sea region (Baltic States, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine) and to plan joint actions aimed at Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) implementation and other joint activities in the region.

The conference was aiming to:

- - facilitate experience exchange between NGOs in the target countries on contributions and restrictions to environmental policy lobbying, policy development and implementation, efforts in public awareness raising and stability of the organizations.
- - develop an Action Plan for NGOs in the Baltic Sea Basin under the BSAP framework
- - develop a list of other joint cooperative measures/project ideas to be jointly implemented in the region
- - network project partners and other NGOs in the region in order to raise effectiveness of NGOs interaction and cooperation.

It was attended by more than 40 participants from the Baltic States, Germany, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine representing different NGOs working in the environmental sector.

1st day of the conference (7th Nov. 2007)

Opening

The Conference was opened by Heidrun Fammler (Baltic Environmental Forum Group). She introduced to the topic of the Conference and gave brief information on the Baltic Environmental Forum Group activities.

Natalia Alexeeva (Center for Transboundary Cooperation – St.Petersburg) presented EU-funded project “NGO potential for contribution to environmental policy development”. Current NGOs Conference is a part of the project’s activities.

Representatives of participating NGOs gave short information on their activities, major areas of expertise, existing networks, examples of NGOs contributions to the environmental policy etc. on the country-wise base as an introductory exercise.

Plenary session 1: Environmental policy and NGOs in the region

Philipp Engewald (Baltic Environment Forum – Germany) presented the results of project investigations on the NGO policy performance. He gave an overview on the NGO questionnaire used for investigations and brought up several issues for discussion such as no-go areas for NGOs actions, instruments used by NGOs for influencing environmental policies in respective countries, NGOs versus public etc.

Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) content and its development were presented by Ekaterina Vorobyeva (Ecology&Business). She also introduced an example of NGO Ecology&Business acting as a HELCOM Operator in Russia and bringing up HELCOM issues to different stakeholders.

The issue of NGOs contribution to the Baltic Sea Action Plan and their role in its development was brought up by Roustam Sagitov (Baltic Fund for Nature - on behalf of WWF/ Baltic Sea program), who shared his vision of BSAP, presented relevant NGOs activities re-

garding BSAP and gave his vision on the required NGO activities aimed at raising Plan's effectiveness and bringing it to the real actions.

Working group session 1: Existing practices, available policy instruments and tools, no-go areas and road map for NGOs in the environmental policy area.

This session was aiming at discussing existing practices, available policy instruments and tools, no-go areas and road map for NGOs in the environmental policy area. 3 working groups were formed: 1 Baltic and 2 Slavic.

Following issues were discussed: general situation with NGOs activities in countries, good and bad practices, NGOs and civil society, instruments and tools used by NGO in the environmental policy process and their effectiveness, no-go areas, restrictions and a road map for NGOs in the future and evaluation of the NGOs effectiveness in the environmental policy process.

Results of discussions:

In general, several common factors were noted while discussing NGOs activities in all countries:

- NGOs are stable in most of the cases whereas administrations and authorities are not stable
- Professionalism is important as a prerequisite for all NGO actions in order to get recognition
- There were several attempts to use NGOs in political games
- NGOs are also using other stakeholders (such as parliament, municipalities, business sector) in order to lobby own interests
- NGOs-phantoms or imitation of public activities exist – than NGOs are constructed in order to simulate civil society and report on public support or engagement
- Ignorance towards NGOs is very common, especially, on the high political level
- High level of bureaucracy is a fact at many countries (especially in Russia and Belarus)
- If lower activities level – than easier cooperation with authorities

- Prevailing economic interests in the society orientation
- Uncertainty in fundraising skills thus leading towards the lack of consistent operations.

Country-specific issues also exist. For example political attitudes among NGOs are different: in Russia this could be seen as political separation, in Ukraine – cooperation despite all differences. NGO's in Belarus are facing more complicated environment due to strong authorities regulations and existing policies in the country. This leads to rather low number of NGOs and insignificant influence on the state policies. In contrary, Ukraine is having high number of NGOs working in different sectors due to rather active public movement aimed at collective problem-solving and lobbying. These public attitudes are also expressed in rather high number of volunteers working in NGOs. Russian specific is a big number of registered, but non-functioning in reality NGO's. Very often the fact, that NGOs activities are financed via relevant European programs and form the part of EU environmental priorities, is helping to open the doors and get authorities support. However, this reason is not always helping in Belarus where EU funding might be treated as political one.

Good and bad practices in represented countries

Court cases in Russia and Ukraine - despite all barriers, NGO should act in existing legal requirements and use existing legal opportunities to express public interests. For example, Bellona case on the nuclear waste from the submarines, than the law on secrecy was abolished due to the court case. This strong legal position also brings authorities recognition – currently, Bellona is invited by Rosatom (Russian authority on nuclear affairs) to all major events. Still, the majority of authorities are considering NGOs as a tool for public education and awareness raising.

Russia also bring the case of heterogenic NGOs interests and positions expressed by numerous NGOs – this creates a mess so authorities do not see NGOs as a one force able to act as their partner. Sometimes, this tool (dividing into small groups and representing different positions) is also used in order to get weaker NGOs position – “segregate and than lead”. Other countries, for example, Belarus, due to low number of NGOs are not experiencing such cases.

Public Councils – often used as a tool for creating an imitation of the public participation. At minimum efforts, authorities are trying to show loyalty towards NGOs and public interests. At the same time, authorities are worried about NGOs actions so they wish to regulate this sector via NGO laws. External financing (such as embassies grants, for example) is considered as “illegal deals” under such laws i.e. as illegal advertisement.

Positive experience exists in Belarus where Birdlife BY is acting as experts to the Ministry bringing in the data on new protection areas etc. so they considered as partners. At the same time, it was an attempt to decrease the funding for Chernobyl program and take away several settlements from the list of “dirty settlements” (i.e. impacted by the Chernobyl nuclear accident), NGOs has conducted an independent assessment of radioactivity levels and informed authorities on the results.

Bad case from Belarus – conservative position towards NGOs actions than even visibility and study materials, produced by NGOs, are not welcome in schools since later on the schools are punished by the authorities.

Examples of successful NGOs activities:

Ukraine

- Signing the Framework convention on protection and sustainable development of Carpathian mountains
- International conference Black Sea Day supported by the International Commission of Danube every year

Belarus

- Publication of Manual for environmental inspectors by NGO “Ecopravo” which was requested by Minprirody.
- Round table about Environmental Code development with different stakeholders where the representatives from Ministry of Natural Resources were requesting more concrete norms in order to be integrated into the legislation.

Russia

- Growing public interests towards wild life in the south of Karelia where citizens got concerned about wild goose and trying now to support their existence.

Used instruments (listed with country references where applicable):

- requests to court or other relevant bodies under the current laws; (RU)
- networking as a tool to unity the efforts; (RU)
- publicity in order to get an attention on the highest level; (RU)
- transboundary cooperation among NGOs for influencing policy decisions in order to get external support and pressure
- Expert feedback on the draft programs and strategies
- Consultative Boards
- Capacity building for authorities (joint visits and conferences) from the NGOs side in order to get their understanding and support (UA and RU);
- Commenting laws and changing them (UA);
- Involving partners and population into activities in order to get backstopping
- Non-traditional support (like church)
- Development of legal acts in the fields where authorities are passive
- Use of extraordinary situations (like oil/gas crisis)
- Expert input from NGOs
- Information dissemination via different channels
- High publicity – in order to get public support and relevant image
- Moral code of NGOs for cooperation and mutual support.

No-go-areas – beside cases than NGOs are not allowed to get it, it would be also the field where NGOs are not going to enter. For example, using private/business funds for own activities – in this case, it should be no any

obligations from the NGOs side to support the funder if the donor is ruining the laws and use of “non-environmental” funds (i.e. polluting companies etc.) should be avoided. Areas where NGOs are not allowed, besides common military issues, security etc., in Belarus even education, health, court cases and statistics are getting closed for NGOs. In other countries – some precise maps and statistics are outside of NGOs reach.

Common limitations – than business interests are over even political/environmental ones.

Effectiveness of NGOs should be quantitatively measurable in order to avoid misinterpretation. For example indicator could be as “how many NGOs initiatives are effective/implemented”. However, the case of Carpathian convention than NGOs were very effective, but quantitatively it was only one output.

In general, NGOs are influencing environmental policy, if:

- Have some influence on its development (at least, on the local level)
- Target group is growing (officials, children and etc.) as well as supporters due to information dissemination etc.
- People are asking for more information and than acting based on it
- NGOs are active participants in parliamentary hearings and law-making.

In order to be more effective, NGOs forms Coalitions (for example, in Baltic States) and green movements, as well as trying to cooperate with relevant authorities as experts and partners in order to take part in the policy process.

Possible numeric indicators:

- Number of active members/supporters
- Participation in the legal development (share of incoming/outgoing)
- Lobbying public interests – number of court cases (if applicable)
- Number of mass-media quotations
- Number of professional NGOs per capita and time of their existence
- Different profiles and preferred actions (several types of activities and their shares)
- Number of visibility items etc.

Civil society in general. Is it active or not?

- YES when it is directly affected;
- NO: low general awareness of environmental concerns

Do we need to activate it?

- YES when we need more power to influence the policy process;
- YES to change market demands via changing consumer behavior;
- NO then it comes to practical policy formulation.

Consumers is a good illustration of the public influence on certain issues as far as policy changes can be done not only through direct lobbying of politicians, but also via changing market demands or electorate opinion. Thus more awareness raising actions are needed for forming environmentally conscious society.

The best means for awareness raising are: TV, radio, internet and large scale campaigns. So, NGOs need to allocate resources in own projects for these activities and join forces to achieve continuous campaigning process.

Road map for NGOs:

- NGOs capacity building aimed at own functioning (fundraising skills etc.) aimed at sustainability
- Strategy development for own NGOs and agreed ones for the networks
- Capacity building for public (starting with kids)
- Capacity building for authorities
- Opening of new sensitive areas – covering “white spots”
- Trying to challenge no-go areas
- Moving from “pilot” actions towards programming and massive influence
- Closing state “gaps”.

2nd day of the conference (8th Nov 2007)

Working groups session 2 – all participants were divided into two major groups according to their interests.

The first group was aimed to discuss Transboundary NGO cooperation at the Eastern EU border and propose relevant joint actions outside of the BSAP. This group was separated into 4 topical sub-groups in order to focus on actions ideas and plans.

1st sub-group: Transboundary cooperation on promoting ecotourism. This group elaborated possible project idea with the goals: to reduce pressure on environment caused by tourism sector in Eastern Europe, to support regional development in the project area and to promote nature friendly tourism.

Project area would cover Europe from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea 8 countries: North-West Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Poland, Ukraine.

Possible partners: NGOs experienced in nature conservation, local tourism and ecotourism; associations of ecotourism/rural tourism; nature conservation authorities and municipalities where the main actions will take place.

Objectives:

- To exchange experience among the project countries as well as other European organisations
- To elaborate a common approach/criteria for ecotourism in the region
- To develop regional eco tourism development plans,
- To design the ecotourism routes
- To build up the capacities of the local people in ecotourism management
- To strengthen the capacities of the regional and local competent bodies in supervision and monitoring of ecotourism management

Actions: exchange of the experience: seminars, study visits; elaboration of common criteria for ecotourism routes: transboundary routes containing a set small nature based trails, setup of the demonstration sites (infrastructure/trails), education/training of tourism organisers/guides/service providers/supervising bodies; marketing: maps, guides, internet and dis-

semination of the information to journalists, municipalities, inhabitants (environmental awareness actions).

Next steps: to write outline of the project, to identify potential donor source; to organise a meeting of the potential partners to define responsibilities and leaderships of the work packages. Then working with the application and its submission.

2nd sub-group: Drinking water quality in rural areas. The groups elaborated project idea in the field of water quality and will be aimed at prevention of small rivers and lakes degradation.

Actions:

- analyzing the situation in countries: monitoring of pilot areas, testing water quality, expert evaluation, legislation analyze
- experience exchange/good practices/solutions: international meetings, pilot projects, information dissemination about pilot activities,
- recommendations: four-levels for all levels from international till local,
- information campaign and final meeting.

Partners:Country partners, international networks, scientific institutes, authorities on different levels

Next steps: sending project outline and developing it further on.

3rd sub-group: Environmental screening/voluntary monitoring. The group has covered several field such as nuclear waste, pollution sectors etc. were public information on transboundary pollution could serve as alternative information on the state of environment.

Goals: cooperation and experience exchange for environmental decision-making

Actions:

- creating the database dealing with environmental monitoring
- international seminar for working groups formation
- manuals for grass-root organizations for monitoring tools like bio-indication
- equipment database and it purchase

- publicity
- trainings for teachers, volunteers how to work with the equipment
- network of public monitoring

As a project area, it could be an Ignalina region with BY-LAT-LT partners. Or, bio-indication on the local level for school environmental clubs.

4th sub-group: Interactive environmental education. This group has discussed education issues and developed the following project idea.

The goal: to make education more interactive and attract people on “man and environment” topics.

Means: moving exhibition center as a bus on major environmental topics.

Needed: local support and partners.

Outputs: reaching remote areas without sufficient access to environmental education.

Next steps: to develop the idea and screen European experience.

ECAT in Lithuania has such a bus so this experience could be used in order to support this project development. Network of such buses could be arranged for higher effectiveness.

All proposed project ideas are to be followed in the groups and developed into the applications.

The second group was aimed to discuss Action plans for NGOs contribution towards the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan. After collecting interests of participating NGOs, two relevant working groups concerning BSAP were formed: General and Biodiversity. These groups allowed to cover the major concerns of NGOs and mainstream comments and proposals.

General group was discussing the Plan as such, the process of its elaboration and NGOs engagement into it, and future actions. The group discussed the problems and proposed several actions or solutions.

Comments on the process of BSAP elaboration and NGOs engagement

- Despite functioning web-site and HELCOM efforts in the information dissemination, public/NGOs knowledge about the Plan is still low,

- Access to the HELCOM documents and the process of commenting/contributing is unclear for many NGOs,
- There are significant country differences in the approaches towards BSAP and the level of stakeholders awareness,
- National planning aimed at BSAP implementation is not fixed at the moment, as well as requirements towards the process that makes NGOs contribution vague,
- NGOs are concerned about the effectiveness of the BSAP implementation and the level of its enforcement.

Proposed actions:

- National coordination roundtables with different stakeholders aimed at BSAP discussion and presentation in order to secure its implementation,
- Public version of the Plan in national languages for raising stakeholders awareness about the Plan,
- Setting clear requirements towards the national plans aimed at BSAP implementation and relevant procedures in order to ensure NGO participation in the process,
- Harmonization of the national plans at the sub-regional level (for example, Gulf of Finland) for reaching synergy among HELCOM countries during national actions implementation,
- Drafting “Code of good practices” among HELCOM countries in order to share positive experience on both content and process issues,
- Supporting informal cooperation under the BSAP for broader actions,
- NGO-HELCOM roundtables for active dialogue and open communication.

Working group on biodiversity component of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) mainly covered one topic of the Plan and made concrete proposals in the biodiversity area.

Comments on the Action Plan:

It was discussed that for successful implementation of the BSAP biodiversity component the following steps would be needed:

- Full implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directive in the Baltic Sea by the EU Member States ASAP;
- Initiation of high level political negotiations with Russia by HELCOM on designation of more marine protected areas (MPA);
- Filling the information gaps on marine biodiversity in the Baltic Sea;
- HELCOM assessment of coherency of the MPA network (incl. international waters);
- Recognizing complexity and different types of MPAs in the Baltic Sea, HELCOM should harmonize reporting;
- Planning a road map to full designation: BSAP should define how the progress will be evaluated;
- Pressure analysis on the whole Baltic Sea ecosystem level is needed: shipping, fisheries, infrastructure development, military activities, recreation;
- HELCOM should do active steps on implementation of African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), especially in Russia.

The group also proposed actions where also NGOs could contribute to BSAP implementation:

- Analyses of the connectivity of the crucial areas for lifecycle of migratory birds and implementing active conservation measures for ensuring favorable conservation status of those species;
- Promotion of sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea region and managing negative pressures from growing tourism in the Eastern Baltic Sea region;
- Strengthening regular reporting about bycatch – setting relevant legal requirements (currently there is no obligation to report about bycatch in Russia), analyses of impacts, incentives for reporting and using alternative fishing gear, awareness raising mechanisms;
- Promotion of sustainable fishery and traditional livelihood;
- Awareness raising of the general society, authorities/decision makers and economic stakeholders on marine biodiversity.

Closing session: Main findings and recommendations for the regional cooperation among the NGOs in the Eastern European Region, road maps and agreements for the future

Outcomes of the conference: 7 countries with rather high number of participants who are ready for cooperation and development of the joint project ideas.

Benefits (as discussed by participants):

- cooperation potential and contacts
- active discussions
- new project and actions ideas
- possibility to find a common ground
- future vision on the possible actions and cooperation
- opening up the mind due to new ideas and experience
- getting to know new approaches
- getting some points clear out of discussions
- training facilitation and presentation skills.

Future relevant actions:

- in-between meetings activities such as joint project development and communication
- discussion in own NGOs to come out with own proposals
- exchange of cooperation experience between Baltic and Black Sea regions via possible joint meetings and project ideas
- contact list for future cooperation
- BSAP issue in the agenda of Latvian NGO Forum at the Ministry meeting
- The same for Lithuania – raising the issue at the NGO Coalition meeting
- Meeting in Russia to settle the same issue
- Meeting in spring to discuss integration and coordination on this matter among participating countries
- Distributing project publication via conference contacts.

All participants welcomed the idea of regular meetings (at least once a year) in order to follow up current ideas and actions. Baltic Sea Day will host the NGO roundtable where the issues of the Baltic Sea Action Plan implementation and national plans development will be discussed. Relevant information will be distributed among the participants as soon as available.

The publication was prepared by the following organisations:

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Baltic Environmental Forum Estonia
Baltic Environmental Forum Latvia
Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania
Baltic Environmental Forum Germany
Ecoproject (Belarus)
Mama-86 (Ukraine)



This publication was prepared with financial support of:
the European Union and the
Estonian Environmental Investment Center

