

Networks at Work

*Status and Needs Assessment of Electronic Networking
and Cooperation among Environmental NGOs
in South Eastern Europe*



THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
for Central and Eastern Europe

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Edited by **Gabor Heves** and **Stefanie Lang**

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Introduction

Foreword

The beginning of the new millennium marked the launch of a new enterprise for environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in South Eastern Europe: an environmental civil society support scheme within the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe (REReP). A strengthened environmental NGO movement is expected to increase public awareness of environmental issues, improve dialogue among various stakeholders in society and facilitate public participation in environmental decision-making.

In spite of its important role in the emerging civil societies of South Eastern European (SEE) countries, at present the South Eastern European environmental NGO community faces a number of difficulties. These range from the legacy of a turbulent recent history and a dire financial situation to the lack of trained staff and the limited extent of day-to-day exchange of information. Considering the diversity of the South Eastern European environmental NGO movement as well as the diversity of their problems, an equally flexible support mechanism has to be identified.

One promising solution has been highlighted by another recent development: the emergence of social networking and its main tool, computer networks. The Internet seems to fit the non-hierarchical structure of environmental NGOs and facilitates community building through the efficient day-to-day exchange of information.

Having found the focus of support, a second challenge had to be overcome: how to design a project that would deliver lasting results and tackle the most important priorities in the most efficient way. In order to pursue these and a number of other goals, the model of computer networks and the NGO community was chosen. Both are considered to favour non-hierarchical and transparent communication.

Having identified the basic principles and main focus of the project, specific tasks were designed in close cooperation with NGOs. Each SEE country or region delegated its NGO representative to the project's steering committee. This decision-making body guided the project's strategic direction, oversaw its implementation and insured transparent operations.

With the management structure, strategic direction and funding in place, the project was planned in detail. For this purpose, during the start-up phase a needs assessment survey was conducted among South Eastern European environmental NGOs. It collected information about their current situation, needs and networking problems. It also encouraged them to take part in project design from the very beginning by inviting their input and recommendations.

This report is the result of these surveys. It not only facilitates project planning and implementation, but also gives all interested readers an overview of current networking activities and future plans of the South Eastern European environmental NGO movement.

Gabor Heves
Project Manager
January 2002
Szentendre, Hungary

Executive summary

PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

This report is based on the results of a survey conducted in eight South Eastern European (SEE) countries and regions during spring 2001. The purpose of the survey was to assess the current situation and specific needs of NGOs for the development of active NGO computer networks. This information will be used by the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) and its partners to determine the specific focus of a project supporting electronic networking activities of South Eastern European environmental NGOs.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire template was prepared (see Appendix 1), which was then distributed in the following countries and territories: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Yugoslavia and Kosovo (currently under UN interim administration). The results were collected through the post or by direct interview. These were analysed and then summarised in the country and regional chapters of this book. Based on the country and regional chapters, the “Regional Overview” was compiled and recommendations made.

GENERAL STATUS OF NGOS

This survey has reinforced earlier assumptions about the close correlation between NGO networking activities and the general development of the NGO sector in each country or region. In some of the surveyed countries (or regions) the environmental NGO movement



is at a relatively low level of development with a limited extent of on-line communication, while in other countries there is a better organised and influential NGO community closely cooperating through internationally acknowledged NGO information networks. To highlight these differences, each country or regional chapter provides a short introduction to the general operational landscape and status of the environmental NGO movement.

COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

In all SEE countries or regions a level of cooperation already exists within the environmental NGO community and with other stakeholders in society (for example the media, government or the business sector). These activities occur on an ad-hoc basis or are institutionalised, for example through annual national NGO meetings or e-mail discussion lists. In this regard information exchange is considered an important prerequisite for any

cooperative activity. However, the survey has found that there is still room for improving the quality and frequency of information exchange both within the NGO community as well as with other stakeholders.

SUGGESTED PRIORITIES

The survey has identified three main areas which hinder the development of electronic networking of environmental NGOs in SEE. The first is related to the scarcity of funding sources. NGOs reported great difficulties in securing reliable funding for financing operational expenditures, purchasing equipment and hiring staff. SEE environmental NGOs are therefore very much dependent on the ongoing support of donors.

The second important area mentioned by the surveyed NGOs was their limited influence in society due to the fragmentation of efforts and limited contact with the media as well as other stakeholders. In spite of significant progress achieved over the past few years, NGOs are still trying to find ways to establish a joint platform to facilitate more efficient communication. As a result, interviewed NGOs were very open to networking initiatives.

The report has identified training and capacity building as the third main priority for further progress in networking activities. It revealed a need for further education in general technical (computer and Internet) skills, network publishing and effective on-line communication, as well as development of English language skills. Interviewees highlighted the importance of “training-of-trainers” seminars as an effective way of spreading knowledge.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

Environmental NGOs taking part in the survey expressed a very positive attitude towards electronic networking and demonstrated high expectations. Most invited support for fundraising activities, training programmes, facilitation of transboundary cooperation and the improvement and maintenance of their technical infrastructure. With such support, NGOs expect to have a greater voice in society, for example through better media relations and increased lobbying power. With more coordination and cooperation through increased and more efficient communication, NGOs also expect a general improvement in their impact and performance.

It is interesting to note that in those countries where NGOs already have much more experience with information exchange in electronic networks, the expressed needs and expectations have moved from technical and financial assistance to capacity building, content and information services.

SUSTAINABILITY OF NETWORKS

An important element of the survey was to identify those factors that facilitate the long-term functioning of NGO networks, even after the project support programme has been completed. Such factors include training, building partnerships and improving information exchange. It is also important for the long-term sustainability of such networks that NGOs find them useful in their work. In this regard, it was promising that most interviewed NGOs expressed an interest in providing active input into the on-line community.

Are you interested in supporting the networking activities of South Eastern European (SEE) environmental NGOs? Would you like to join an SEE network? Or do you simply want to know more about the project?

Visit the project Home Page at www.rec.org/REC/Programs/SEE_Networking/.

Background

WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT AND WHY WAS IT PRODUCED?

This report covers three main discussion items. First, to set the stage for a more detailed discussion regarding NGO networking (particularly electronic), it looks at the current status of the environmental NGO community in each South East European (SEE) country and region. Secondly, it covers the most important needs and problems of the NGOs so that the main obstacles to networking can be identified. Thirdly, it looks at how NGOs see the issue of electronic networking and what their expectations and recommendations for external support are.

This knowledge contributes to the ultimate goal of the survey, which is to provide background information for a new international NGO networking project (for more information please see the next subsection). With this knowledge at hand the project will focus on the most important issues and hence improve the overall efficiency, quality and impact of assistance to NGO networking. The results of the needs assessment will be used as a basis for project implementation.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THIS REPORT AND THE PROJECT IT SUPPORTS?

This survey was written as one of the start-up activities in a project supporting environmental NGO electronic networking and cooperation in eight SEE countries and regions (see the project home page at <www.rec.org/REC/Programs/SEE_Networking/>). The project itself was initiated and funded (by the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway) within the framework of the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe (REReP), <www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REReP/>, which is the environmental component of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (<www.stabilitypact.org>).

One of the components of the REReP process is the strengthening of civil society in its beneficiary countries and regions. An important vehicle in achieving this goal is to promote networking and cooperation between South Eastern European environmental NGOs by establishing or supporting electronic NGO networks. The ultimate goal of cooperation through such networks is to foster a stronger and more coordinated NGO community.

WHY FOCUS ON ELECTRONIC NETWORKS?

While the emphasis of the project is on networking and cooperation, it is important to note that Internet applications have become very important tools in supporting communication and information exchange on professional matters. The properties of electronic networks can be useful for the environmental NGO community by providing a cost-effective tool that facilitates various types of horizontal (non-hierarchical) interactions (one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one and many-to-many).

The overall status, needs and problems of the SEE environmental NGO sector are relatively well documented in the literature (see Appendix 5). In addition, a significant amount of organisational experience has accumulated within various local and international institutions. However, there is little up-to-date published information about the current status of information exchange and networking among SEE environmental NGOs. These are the main reasons for conducting the regional survey and the compilation of this research report.

WHAT IS KNOWN SO FAR?

As the authors of a recent NGO needs assessment have pointed out, “the problems mentioned most frequently by South Eastern European environmental NGOs are insufficient funding, limited access to means of communication, an acute lack of volunteers, and the general weakness of the environmental movement.”¹ Electronic networks seem to have the potential to help address these problems. Examples that support this observation range from the cost efficiency of e-mail through to on-line fundraising, to those cases when geographically dispersed NGOs work on a joint project (e.g. on a campaign, joint project proposal or a publication).

It was also pointed out that there is still plenty of room for improvement in terms of cooperation. While “56 percent of NGOs find cooperation with other NGOs critically important,” most see relatively little interaction between environmental NGOs and other organisations, and if they do interact, it is mostly at a local level.

Training and capacity building are also considered to be crucial elements in enhancing cooperation. Many NGOs are not well informed on how they could benefit from an electronic network or make the most use of it if they are already network members.

Considering the very low budget of most SEE environmental NGOs, external financial and technical support is of great significance. For example, almost all NGOs need support in financing hardware, software, and telecommunications costs (which are often not covered by project funding).

Methodology

This report was compiled from the results of three research components, which were designed to complement each other and collect information in the most effective way. From the results of questionnaire surveys and interviews, each local project partner prepared a country chapter, or in the case of Kosovo, a regional chapter (due to its current political and administrative status, Kosovo is discussed in a separate chapter). The overall publication was then compiled using this information as well as the results of a literature review.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before questionnaires were designed and distributed, a literature review was made. This helped to set the stage for the report as well as to identify the main trends, problems and needs (see the bibliography in Appendix 5). Literature reviews were conducted by the project coordinators at the REC’s head office.

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

An English language questionnaire template was prepared for all countries and regions (see the full questionnaire in Appendix 2). This was translated and distributed in each target country or region. Questionnaire surveys were performed by local project partners: REC Country and Field Offices (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia, Yugoslavia and Kosovo), national NGO network coordinators (BlueLink in Bulgaria and StrawberryNet in Romania) and an NGO (Green Action in Croatia).

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Face-to-face interviews with NGO staff served two main purposes. One was to inform them about this up-coming project, involve them in project planning from the beginning and encourage them to take an active part in the project. Personal interviews also provided valuable information for detailed project planning and followed a similar structure to the questionnaires. See Appendix 1 to read the detailed methodology as well as instructions for conducting interviews. The same project partners who performed the questionnaire surveys conducted the personal interviews.

Regional Overview

General situation

It should be noted that significant differences exist in the social, economic and political situation of different countries and sub-regions in South Eastern Europe (SEE). These different situations directly influence the status and general working conditions of environmental organisations.

In spite of the many difficulties, environmental NGOs are active and visible in the whole SEE region. Their influence in society has grown and they are gaining increasing recognition from the general public as well as from governmental bodies.

NGOs from Yugoslavia (including Kosovo) have experienced great difficulties owing to war and political turmoil in recent years. The Kosovo report mentions a considerable number of NGOs without communications equipment and offices. Yugoslav NGOs suffered from the UN embargo, when international cooperation and funding almost came to a standstill. These environmental NGOs are now reaching out to renew and strengthen their activities.

The chart on the next page (Chart 1) gives you an overview of the number of environmental NGOs in each SEE country and region as well as the current population.

With regard to the political influence of these environmental organisations, the reports mention different trends, successes and obstacles. In Romania, for example, the focus of NGOs shifts from national to regional and local environmental issues. Kosovo suffers from so many economic and political problems that environmental issues are not very high on the public agenda. Albanian NGOs made several attempts to establish an umbrella organisation to coordinate their activities, but with no success so far. In contrast to this, there is an active and influential environmental umbrella organisation in FYR Macedonia. In Croatia an interesting poll result was published about public trust in environmental NGOs: the environmental movement gained higher public confidence than trade unions or the independent press.

Some oft-mentioned weaknesses of environmental organisations include a lack of contacts with the press and media in general, a lack of partnership with national governmental institutions and a lack of national and international cooperation. Funding was also mentioned as a crucial issue: funds are not always consistent over the years and the types of funds available vary from activity to activity. It seems to be a general problem that funds rarely cover the running costs of offices, equipment and staff. The organisations therefore remain highly dependent on further donations.

Existing networking and cooperation

The national surveys have demonstrated that in all countries a certain level of cooperation already exists. At present, in most South East European countries cooperative activities are implemented without using a dedicated NGO electronic communication network. In most of these countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia and Yugoslavia), however, some form of NGO umbrella organisation exists. Besides such institutionalised forms of NGO cooperation, NGO coalitions often form on an ad-hoc basis, primarily to implement specific projects.

Two SEE countries already have an active and internationally recognised electronic NGO information network: BlueLink in Bulgaria and StrawberryNet in Romania. As a result, NGOs in these countries have gained considerable experience from being part of a network. Networking among environmental NGOs has also reached a high level in Croatia, but cur-

The following REC publications offer more information on the general status of Central and Eastern European NGOs you can obtain the following REC publications:

NGO Directory: a Directory of Environmental Non-governmental Organisations in Central and Eastern Europe and

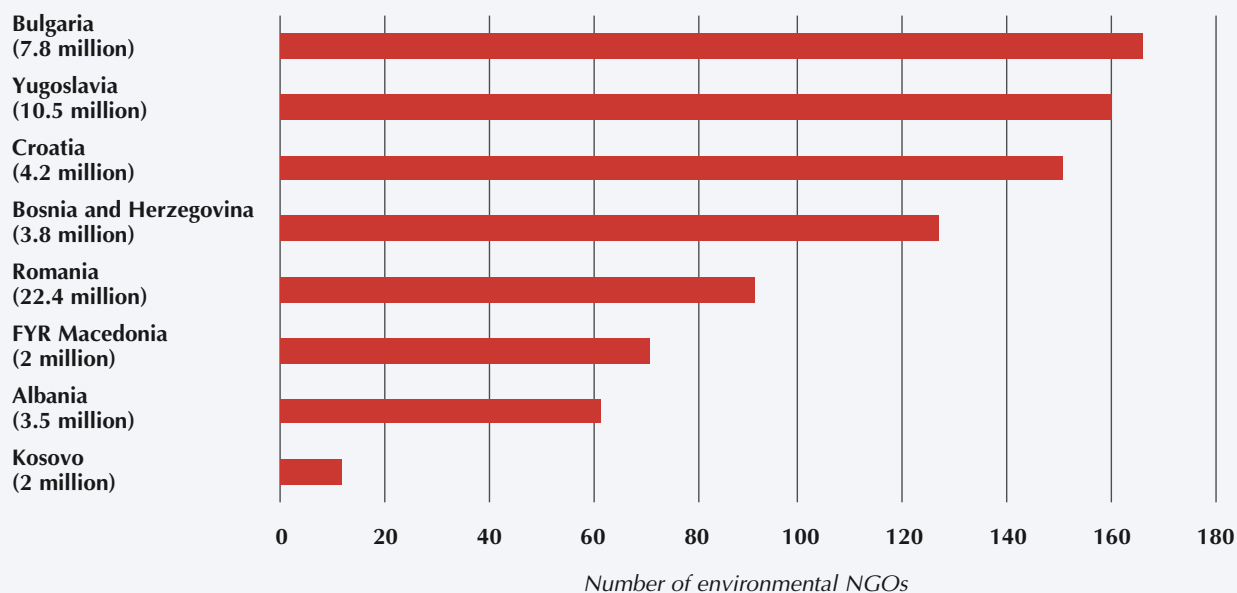
Problems, Progress and Possibilities: A Needs Assessment of Environmental NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe.

Please see the bibliography (Appendix 5) for more details about downloading or ordering these publications.

CHART 1

Number of environmental NGOs as of July 2001²

Country or region and its population



rently there is no electronic network for environmental NGOs in the country. In the other countries of the region, environmental NGOs have not created an electronic network, though during the interviews they were very motivated and ready to use such a network in their work.

It is interesting to note that in those countries where more NGOs have apparently been able to connect to the Internet and use networks more easily, the focus of activities has shifted from technical and financial issues to capacity building, content and information services.

Generally there is a positive attitude towards cooperation and networking, with very few cases of unsuccessful cooperation reported. Networking and cooperation is mainly done for reasons of project implementation, campaigning, fundraising and general exchange of ideas and experience. Existing institutionalised networks or umbrella organisations channel and organise cooperation. In the absence of these institutions, NGOs themselves look for cooperative partners. Nevertheless, networking techniques, cooperation ethics and communication methods are not systematically incorporated into NGO activities.

It is important to draw attention to the increasing professionalism of the environmental NGO movement in South Eastern Europe, in which NGOs increasingly recognise the benefits of cooperation, information exchange and networking. Learning from the experience of Central European and Western countries, this trend creates good conditions for setting up electronic networks that are driven and managed by NGO coalitions.

Needs assessment

In order to achieve a high level of participation by environmental NGOs and efficient network use, NGOs need support in certain areas. During the survey needs were divided into financial, technical and training requirements. Although all three were treated equally, NGOs often focused on technical needs as their main obstacle. One national report (Bulgaria) even remarked a typical attitude was to concentrate on equipment needs and that the rest “would come automatically.” The report pointed out it was necessary to emphasise the need for more systematic training and capacity building, and discourage the belief that everything could be learned “by doing.”

The majority of NGOs ranked training needs closely behind equipment needs. Financial support is also necessary to pay for telecommunication costs, including external Internet services. It appears that those costs tend to be viewed as higher in rural areas than in urban areas, primarily because of the increased need to purchase computer equipment. Unreliable telephone lines and Internet servers are also a problem, notably in Kosovo. To solve this, NGOs

CHART 2

Technical obstacles hindering network use

	<i>Lack of facilities in town</i>	<i>Lack of equipment in the NGO's office</i>	<i>Unreliable phone lines</i>	<i>No Internet service provider in town</i>
Albania				
Bosnia and Herzegovina				
Bulgaria				
Croatia				
FYR Macedonia				
Romania				
Yugoslavia				
Kosovo				

 Low




































 High

CHART 3

Training needs for successful participation in a network

	<i>English language</i>	<i>Information management</i>	<i>On-line publishing</i>	<i>Network use (technical skills)</i>
Albania				
Bosnia and Herzegovina				
Bulgaria				
Croatia				
FYR Macedonia				
Romania				
Yugoslavia				
Kosovo				

 Low  High

have for instance been advised to establish a network server at the local REC Country Office and make it available to all network participants. The following chart (Chart 2) shows priorities among various technical needs mentioned by interview partners.

Training needs vary from English language training to specific “training-of-trainers” programmes to build capacity in network publishing and Web page set-up. The main training needs are presented in Chart 3 as prioritised in the interviews.

Other obstacles mentioned were the need to find funds to pay for computer maintenance staff and cover Internet and telephone bills, as well as a general staff shortage.

Purposes of networking

The surveyed participants designated several fields of activities which could be enhanced by networked cooperation. Many of them also had specific ideas on how and in which areas an electronic network would be of benefit to them. The following chart (Chart 4) gives an overview of the sectors in which NGOs could collaborate through a network.









To make a network usable and effective, most NGOs are also willing to give input. They would put forward information about their projects, case studies on best practices, donor information or funding possibilities and general information of common interest. NGOs with electronic network experience expressed their concern that the information flow should be managed (moderated) to avoid an overflow of information and to make a network more user-friendly. Chart 5 provides an estimate of how much time NGOs would be willing to invest in the network.

Foreseen benefits

All interviewed organisations expressed a very positive attitude towards the project and its implementation. They see benefits for their general professional performance, hope that collecting information on fundraising and donors will be easier and expect support in their

CHART 4

Fields of planned cooperation with the help of an electronic network

	<i>Albania</i>	<i>Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>	<i>Bulgaria</i>	<i>Croatia</i>	<i>FYR Macedonia</i>	<i>Romania</i>	<i>Yugoslavia</i>	<i>Kosovo</i>
Joint campaigning and project implementation								
Information about donors and funds								
Exchange of experience/good practices								
Development of technical skills								
Better access to information								
Discussion on common environmental problems								
Web publishing								

 Low priority  High priority

technical infrastructure. NGOs are also looking forward to the opportunity of cooperating on an international level. In particular, they have high hopes for cross-border cooperation in protecting common natural features.

It is also hoped that through better professional performance, NGOs can raise both their public profile and their political influence. They hope for stronger lobbying power and more impact in the media.

The following list contains the benefits that the NGO interviewees expect from this project (in order of importance):

- increased fundraising possibilities;
- trained staff;
- better computer infrastructure;
- joint cross-border environmental projects;
- establishment of lobbying coalitions;
- increased public awareness;
- better communication infrastructure;
- improved public and media relations;
- increased professionalism in information management;
- extended information flow;
- collaboration for better prioritisation of problems and issues;
- strengthened contacts;
- established contacts to NGOs in Western Europe; and
- funds for phone bills.

NGO recommendations

In line with the diversity of the South Eastern European environmental NGO community, their recommendations for the project embraced a wide range of issues. Each recommendation in the list below is followed by the abbreviations³ of those countries (or regions) where it was reported to be of high importance.

TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

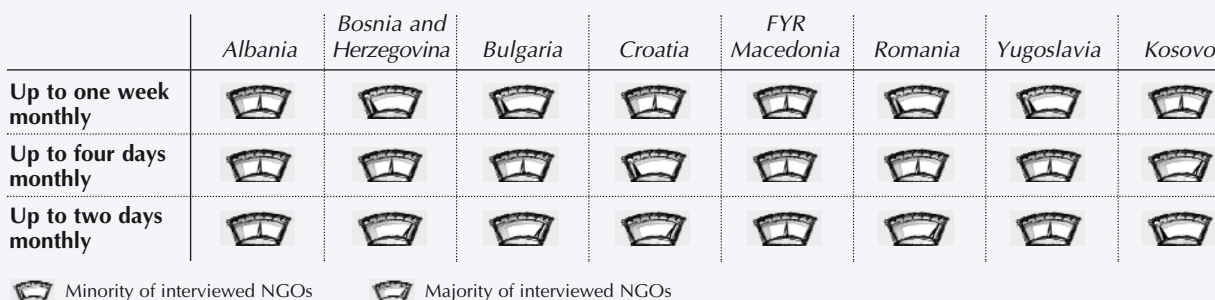
- provide suitable computer equipment (AL, BiH, BG, HR, MK, RO, YU, KOS);
- cover communication costs (AL, BG);
- provide suitable computer software (BG, HR);
- provide disk space for on-line content (MK);
- provide or facilitate Internet access (AL, KOS); and
- employ professional staff to maintain the equipment (HR).

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

- organise general training seminars (AL, YU);
- improve communication nationally and internationally (YU);
- provide training in electronic network use (MK, RO);
- offer training for on-line publishing and on-line discussion (MK, RO, YU, KOS);
- host distance learning training (YU);

CHART 5

Amount of time NGOs would be willing to contribute to the network



- use the “training-of-trainers” method for capacity building (BG, MK, YU); and
- support English language training (KOS).

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

- beware of the monopolisation of assistance and training by strong organisations (BG);
- do not support “one-man band” organisations (BG);
- enhance transboundary and international cooperation (KOS);
- REC Field Office in Kosovo should implement the project in the first year (KOS);
- establish a steering committee (AL);
- establish or support twinning partnerships (AL);
- encourage regional and national collaboration among NGOs (AL); and
- support monthly NGO meetings (AL).

NETWORK CONTENT, USE AND ORGANISATION

- structure and group the information to avoid information overload (BG, MK);
- set up action alert e-mail lists for environmental accidents (MK);
- charge a fee for network use (BG);
- make information available on the network which cannot be obtained elsewhere (BG);
- provide a connection to Western European networks (BiH); and
- avoid fees for network use (AL).



Country and Regional Chapters

Albania

By Mihallaq Qirjo, REC Country Office Albania

INTRODUCTION

More than 40 environmental NGOs took part in the survey, representing 56 percent of the registered environmental NGOs in the country. Of these, 36 NGOs (50 percent of the total number registered) have completed the questionnaire, and a further 20 NGO representatives were interviewed in person. Interviews were conducted by REC Country Office staff (Country Office director and project manager).

GENERAL SITUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS IN ALBANIA

Albanian environmental NGOs can be described as small groups of dedicated environmentalists working mainly on solving local environmental problems. Their membership varies from a dozen to a few hundred people. The average membership is between 20 and 50 people. In most cases NGOs are run by a core of highly active members (usually about 5-10 percent of all members). These active members have well-established contacts with different levels of government, donors and other partners.

A recent trend is that NGO activities have become increasingly professional. One can recognise this by the growing ratio of complex and more demanding projects, such as consultancy services and studies. However, the main focus areas continue to be nature protection and biodiversity, urban environmental problems and environmental education.

It still seems to be a challenge to reach out to a large number of people, especially during campaigns. This is why environmental NGOs are trying to improve their public relations efforts and coordinate their activities with non-environmental NGOs.

Out of approximately 75 national and local environmental NGOs, about 25 percent are active all year round. Most environmental NGOs implement their activities on a project basis. For them, the financial support coming from sources within or outside Albania remains crucial. Although there has been a slight increase in the level of local funding sources, most funding still comes from foreign or international donors.

EXISTING NETWORKING AND COOPERATION

Sixty-seven percent of the interviewed NGOs reported that they have established contacts with up to five Albanian environmental organisations. Twenty-five percent reported cooperating with between six and 15 other NGOs, while three claimed to keep in touch with as many as 45 other Albanian organisations.

Cooperation at an international level is more limited. Only two of the surveyed NGOs have established collaboration with a relatively large number of foreign organisations (10-18), while 17 percent of NGOs do not have any contact with partners outside Albania.

Fifty-eight percent of the environmental NGOs reported good relationships with governmental institutions, public authorities and scientific or educational institutions. Approximately one third of the NGOs (30 percent) maintain contacts with 10-20 different institutions at least once in a few months.

It still seems to be a challenge to reach out to a large number of people, especially during campaigns

The experiences from cooperative projects are mainly positive, leading to an increased level of communication and transparency

In the last two years a constant increase was registered in the number of NGOs using on-line services. The reason for this could be the growing number of Internet service providers (at the time of writing these are situated only in the capital, Tirana). Although there are technical and financial problems, one-third of environmental NGOs have access to computer networks. They normally use e-mail for communication, and half of them have subscribed to environmental mailing lists and environmental electronic newsletters. Thirty-nine percent of the organisations use the Internet to research background information for their work and for on-line cooperation with other organisations. Only one NGO (Preservation of Forest and Green Environment) uses the Internet for on-line campaigning and five others for Web publishing. Although fundraising is one of the biggest challenges for both national and local NGOs, only 22 percent use the Internet for this purpose.

The experience of cooperation with other organisations is mostly limited to joint project implementation. Almost all Albanian NGOs interviewed (92 percent) reported that they had been cooperating with other NGOs to carry out activities. Furthermore, this cooperation quite often involves other, non-environmental NGOs, such as organisations dealing with women's rights, youth or health issues. While discussing the type of collaboration it became clear that more than half of the NGOs (64 percent) collaborate on fundraising and common campaigns. One area where cooperation has been very limited is lobbying. Only a limited number of more professional NGOs could present cases of successful cooperation in the field of strategy preparation (e.g. biodiversity strategy) or the establishment of protected areas. In the latter case cooperation has been higher among experts and on specific topics.

In general, regular collaboration among NGOs is evaluated as an achievement for the whole movement, although the actual level is not yet viewed as fully satisfactory or effective. It is often other driving forces that encourage NGOs to find ways to cooperate. For example,



several donors prefer cooperative projects on a national or regional level. NGOs have therefore found it easier to raise funds and involve a larger number of experts through cooperation. Experiences from cooperative projects are mainly positive, leading to an increased level of communication and transparency. In addition, NGOs credit cooperation for some of their achievements, such as the involvement of local authorities and communities in solving common problems. Only two organisations

did not succeed in collaboration and only three viewed other NGOs as competitors rather than partners. NGOs justify such cases either by the lack of other NGOs working in the same field or by being able to provide similar services.

Between 1995 and 1999, several attempts have been made to establish an umbrella organisation for the environmental NGO sector. Initially, at least 20-30 NGOs were interested in coordination and information exchange. However, most attempts failed or met with limited success. Reasons include a lack of premises and other facilities, an unclear framework and the tendency of many NGOs involved to focus on their own benefits instead of regarding the initiative as advantageous to the whole sector. Parallel attempts to establish umbrella organisations created confusion and served as a disincentive for some NGOs to participate in such networks.

Recently, a project of MilieuKontakt Oost Europa (from the Netherlands) has been facilitating the process of cooperation among NGOs. The project supported a national meeting of environmental NGOs in December 2000, where benefits, problems and obstacles were discussed. The major focus areas of discussion were NGO cooperation and institutional development. These types of meetings are quite rare and unconventional for Albanian NGOs. Based on the positive feedback, MilieuKontakt Oost Europa is considering the support of a second annual meeting. Concrete results from the first meeting include the establishment of working groups in specific areas such as biodiversity, implementation of the Aarhus Convention and drafting an NGO strategy.

Needs and problems for network use

One of the biggest problems identified by the survey is the difficult financial situation and the lack of resources to purchase suitable computer hardware and software. Payment for extra staff is also a problem, while 25 percent of NGOs complain they cannot afford Internet access fees.

None of the NGOs seem to have the capacity and resources to organise a national environmental NGO meeting. The regional meetings organised so far were focused on certain regions and topics, and did not involve everybody in the field.

NGO representatives are interested in the establishment of a proper computer-based network, although a considerable number of NGOs mention obstacles and a lack of resources. Sixty-one percent need personnel who have the technical skills to use the network. Forty-four percent need technical assistance in the form of training, such as communication through mailing lists and management of information. English language capacity to use the network does not seem to be a problem for Albanian NGOs.

It was observed that there is a general lack of suitable computer equipment in NGO offices as well as outside the office (for example Internet cafés, universities, libraries, other NGOs). About 80 percent of Albanian environmental organisations reported the lack of equipment as the biggest obstacle in using electronic networks. Only 44 percent of the interviewed NGOs



can access the Internet through a member's home or office account. Donors either do not consider NGO institutional support as a priority or they aim to reach it through supporting NGO projects. However, the budgets of these projects rarely reach more than a few thousand U.S. dollars. Thus, it is often insufficient to purchase hardware that can run more up-to-date software. NGOs also highlighted the need for donations in-kind.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

The interviewed NGOs welcomed the project and are open to projects helping them in their cooperation and partnership activities, as these are considered to be a weak point in their work. The project is expected to assist them in increasing the volume and type of

About eighty percent of Albanian environmental organisations reported the lack of equipment as the biggest obstacle in using electronic networks

Setting up networks is considered to be a useful mechanism to promote the more sustainable use of natural resources

information exchanged, to facilitate direct and effective contacts among partners, to facilitate the establishment of working groups among NGOs and to exchange information with donors in Albania and abroad.

Most of the interviewed organisations have the capacity to provide different kinds of information of public interest to other organisations (for example data or background information on specific topics, case studies, articles, video tapes and training in special areas).

International cooperation by environmental NGOs could be improved by working on joint, internationally funded projects (86 percent), exchanging ideas and best practices (78 percent) and working on transboundary environmental problems (62 percent). Lobbying at the international level is mentioned by 44 percent of NGOs.

Interviewed organisations see the following areas as the main focus for assistance (not ranked):

NGO Capacity Building and Institution Strengthening

- setting up an electronic network and providing electronic communications equipment;
- improving the NGO's infrastructure;
- enhancing the NGO's fundraising capacity;
- increasing efficiency, management capacity and institutional capacity building; and
- improving the NGO's reputation and image.

Cooperation among NGOs

- making contacts and exchanging ideas among NGOs;
- strengthening the collaboration among NGOs with better prioritisation of issues, problems and questions.
- establishing coalitions for lobbying for environmental advocacy; and
- facilitating collaboration among Albanian and foreign NGOs.

Efficiency of NGO activities

- planning and implementing joint environmental projects;
- project inception and initiation;
- enhancing the quality of project implementation by providing qualified staff with good equipment;
- establishing joint projects to solve environmental problems on an international and regional level;
- providing the general public with more information; and
- raising public awareness on a local, national, regional and international level.

PLANNED NETWORK USE

Cooperation is seen as a benefit in those areas where NGOs would like to work in the future. Forty-four percent of NGOs are looking for project partners in international projects and information about donors and funds. Significant interest has also been expressed for other areas such as case studies and best practices, successful projects, developing information technology skills as well as exchanging and getting access to environmental and other professional information (22 percent of NGOs). The interviewed NGOs plan to collaborate with a wide range of other Albanian and foreign NGOs, with a tendency to strengthen trans-boundary cooperation through joint projects for the protection of shared assets.

NGOs expressed their interest in cooperating in various fields, such as training activities, conducting studies, environmental protection, environmental monitoring, biodiversity, joint research projects, environmental education and public awareness. Some of their more specific interests include professional assistance, urban waste management, sustainable development, exchanging experience and information on protected areas, endangered species, trans-boundary public participation and protection of wetlands.

Setting up networks is considered a useful mechanism for exchanging experience, increasing public awareness of environmental protection, promoting the more sustainable use of natural resources and increasing the general level of public awareness about NGOs and their activities.

Information of public interest is considered to be one of the most important contributions a network can give to its members as well as society. The interviewed NGOs consider electronic networks an effective way to disseminate information. Considering the amount of information they have, they are willing to invest up to two days per month to provide input into the network (nearly 10 percent of a working month).

NGOs consider electronic networks as an effective way to disseminate information

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROJECT

Several recommendations were collected from the interviewed NGOs, which should help to make the project more successful. The recommendations stress the need to monitor and direct the establishment of networks and cooperation in Albania. Some other remarks focus on the general need for capacity building and training for environmental NGOs as well as the technical aspects of the project. The following list summarises the main recommendations:

Strengthen cooperation among NGOs

- encourage the collaboration of NGOs within different regions of Albania;
- encourage and support experienced NGOs to establish twinning partnerships;
- establish networks in specific areas of Albania (for example around the main lakes, Ohrid and Prespa); and
- support NGOs with suitable computer equipment.

Institutionalise cooperation among NGOs

- establish a regional and/or international steering committee for the project to facilitate and help NGOs to become involved and contribute to this project; and
- support monthly meetings of NGOs for sharing experience, reporting, and developing work plans.

Capacity building for NGOs

- training and capacity building for NGOs, at least in those 12 regions where regional environmental agencies are operating;
- pilot projects to train the NGO members in rural areas;
- provide Internet access to NGOs in the main districts of Albania;
- no network fees should be charged; and
- the Web page of REC Albania should be considered as a means to facilitate the implementation of the project.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

By Inka Sehovic, REC Country Office Bosnia and Herzegovina

INTRODUCTION

The REC Country Office estimates that there are 130 environmental NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Questionnaires were filled out and returned by 20 NGOs, while face-to-face interviews were conducted with another 10. The REC Country Office interviewed NGOs from all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including Republica Srpska.

GENERAL SITUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The last decade in Bosnia and Herzegovina was dominated by four years of war. As a result, public environmental awareness is still rather low. However, there is growing public interest in nature and environmental preservation, well indicated by the growing number of and support for active NGOs. The environmental NGO movement is still at a relatively early stage of development, therefore external support and assistance is of great importance.

EXISTING NETWORKING AND COOPERATION

In 2001 Bosnian environmental NGOs established an umbrella organisation called Eco-Forum. A large number of NGOs showed interest by taking part in its founding session, out of which 20 NGOs are currently actively involved. Each member NGO delegates its representative to the Eco-Forum, which elects a president. The Eco-Forum is not officially registered at present, and is active mostly on a local and regional level. Members plan to improve their communication and build connections with environmental NGOs in Western and South Eastern Europe by setting up an electronic information network.

While cooperation usually takes place at a local level, during the interviews many NGOs expressed their interest in cooperating regionally and internationally. They see cooperation as more important in protecting common natural assets, such as rivers, lakes and protected areas. Most interviewed NGOs mentioned the possibility of sharing information such as general data, case studies, articles and press releases with other organisations.

Bosnian environmental NGOs typically cooperate with other NGOs, governmental organisations and scientific organisations. Nearly a third of the interviewed NGOs cooperate internationally with NGOs from neighbouring Croatia and Yugoslavia. NGOs also cooperate with others in fundraising, project implementation, campaign implementation and lobbying.



NGOs expect the networking project to support information exchange and a more efficient communication

While Bosnian NGOs in general use e-mail less often than fax or postal services, NGOs with access to e-mail tend to use it on a daily basis. NGOs with access to the Internet typically use it for on-line publishing, searching for work-related information, on-line campaigning and on-line fundraising.

NEEDS AND PROBLEMS FOR NETWORK USE

Most NGOs are in need of basic support, such as training on proposal writing, project and financial management as well as support for office and technical equipment. Most of all, however, they need funding for their environmental projects.

Regarding training needs, 90 percent of the interviewed NGOs lack personnel that is technically capable of using a network. The interviewed NGOs consider the lack of qualified personnel as one of the most important obstacles hindering efficient use of networks. They consider the need for English-speaking personnel of medium importance.



Interviewed NGOs mentioned the obstacle of lacking funds to purchase computer equipment, subcontract experts and pay for Internet services and phone bills.

The main technical issue limiting the use of networks is the lack of suitable computer equipment, Internet access in the office and outside the office (e.g. in an Internet café). The few NGOs that do have Internet access use private accounts at home or from public Internet centres.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

The interviewed NGOs expect this project to support information exchange and more efficient communication. As a result they expect to raise public awareness of environmental issues and put them higher on the national political agenda.

NGOs also expect that this project will allow better cooperation and communication with other environmental NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and South Eastern Europe. In addition, NGOs hope to develop their human and technical capacities.

The project should improve NGO cooperation on international environmental issues, especially among NGOs in neighbouring countries. Examples may include: the exchange of best practices and general information, taking part in international joint projects, working on transboundary environmental problems, fundraising for joint projects and organising project activities.

PLANNED NETWORK USE

The interviewed NGOs are planning to cooperate with NGOs from neighbouring cantons, regions and countries. Platforms for cooperation may include the Eco-Forum or the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe (REReP). Areas of planned cooperation are mainly in the field of ecology, media, youth initiatives, lobbying, environmental protection, strengthening of civil society and information dissemination.

Regarding the question of providing information to the on-line NGO community, almost every NGO was willing to devote up to two days per month to share information of general interest.

All in all, Bosnian NGOs plan to use the Internet for the following activities:

- searching for partners to implement international projects;
- gathering ideas and examples about successful projects;
- developing the skills needed to use information technologies (computers);
- exchanging information about the environment;
- securing access to environmental information;
- gathering information about potential donors and funds;
- publishing information on the environment through the Web;
- promoting the activities of environmental NGOs; and
- publishing news about the environment (based on information received from the media).

Recommendations for the project

Several recommendations were given by interviewed NGOs — mostly touching on the field of enhanced international cooperation and support by technical or financial means to purchase computer equipment.

One suggestion was that during project implementation care should be taken to reach out to NGOs in various regions. A wide regional representation is considered to be an important factor in strengthening the Bosnian environmental civil society. Further recommendations included:

- After the creation of a South Eastern European environmental NGO network it should be connected to NGO networks in Western Europe.
- This project should add value by supporting NGOs in establishing contacts with international information networks.
- There should be grants to purchase computer equipment. Such donations would facilitate communication and lobbying.
- The project should also help NGOs to get access to the Internet.

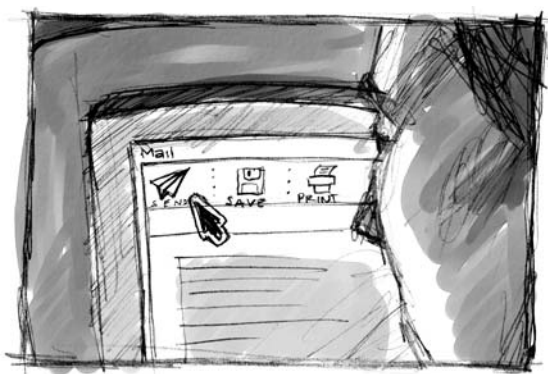
Bulgaria

By Evgenia Tasheva, BlueLink Information Network

NGOs have a strong motivation to be connected and communicate with other organisations

INTRODUCTION

An NGO needs assessment survey was conducted in June 2001 with 27 environmental NGOs. The interviewed NGOs were selected on the basis of an NGO classification by type, level of activity, location and sphere of activity. One NGO is part of an international network; three have an extensive network of local branches in the country; two have branches in different towns; three are professional and centralised, working on a national level; seven are small, professional and specialised; six actively involve students and the youth in their work and five



NGOs work on a local and regional level. Fifteen NGOs were surveyed in face-to-face interviews, six were interviewed by telephone, three sent their answers by e-mail, and an additional three organisations responded to the announcements posted on the BlueLink Web site and the NGO mailing list.

This study used four main sources of quantitative data regarding the number of active environmental NGOs in Bulgaria: the list of participants in the Third Annual National Meeting for Environmental NGOs (December 18-

20, 2000, in Sofia); the list of subscribers to a large electronic mailing list for environmental NGOs in Bulgaria <ngos@bluelink.net>; the Bulgarian section of the NGO Directory compiled by the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC); and a database of registered environmental NGOs at the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Waters (MoEW). No official and reliable statistics of the number of active environmental NGOs is available for Bulgaria.

GENERAL SITUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS IN BULGARIA

The situation of Bulgarian NGOs can be highlighted by some statistics. The total number of registered participants in the Third Annual National Meeting of Environmental NGOs is more than 200 organisations (including representatives of government, the business community, international financial institutions, ambassadors and donors), out of which approximately 170 are environmental NGO representatives. This number is a good indicator of the willingness of NGOs to communicate with other organisations as well as to work towards strengthening cooperation in the environmental NGO sector on a national level.

The NGO Directory² compiled by the REC contains 166 entries (as of July 2001). The unofficial database at the Ministry of Environment and Waters contains some 300 entries of environmental NGOs registered in Bulgaria.³ About 50 of those are defined as truly active by MoEW officials, out of which only 30 have regular interaction with the MoEW.⁶

During the survey it was observed that NGOs with younger members tend to have better computer, Internet and English language literacy. At the same time, organisations with members mostly from other age groups show increasing awareness of the need to involve the youth in environmental NGO activities.

A large portion (74 percent) of surveyed NGOs own computer equipment, all of which have printers, and 95 percent of which have modems. Despite the recognised need for improving the technical base of NGOs, less than half of the interviewed NGOs (48 percent) plan and have secured funds for an upgrade in the near future.

Eighty-one percent of interviewed NGOs use computers on a daily basis and 78 percent use e-mail every day. Most of the surveyed NGOs (92 percent) use e-mail more often than fax and regular mail, reflecting an increasing awareness among NGOs of information technology. Approximately half (55 percent) of NGOs access the Internet from their offices. Other access points include: members' home/office (14 percent), Internet cafés (11 percent), university/school facilities (11 percent) and other NGO offices (9 percent). Twenty-nine percent of all respondents rank the lack of suitable computer equipment as the main obstacle to effectively using the Internet, while 30 percent report no obstacles. The fact that the percentage of NGOs which use e-mail regularly is higher than the percentage of NGOs which have computers, or those which have Internet access in their office, emphasises the NGOs' strong motivation to be connected and communicate with other organisations.

Active involvement in the electronic network depends on its usefulness in offering information that is difficult to obtain elsewhere

EXISTING NETWORKING AND COOPERATION

Annual meetings on a national level have become a tradition for the Bulgarian environmental sector. The latest (third) national meeting was held in December 2000 in Sofia, when NGO participants elected the representative of the Bulgarian environmental movement to the REReP Steering Committee. These national meetings provide unique opportunities for common strategic planning and coordination of NGO activities, as well as for increasing the environmental visibility of NGOs in the national media. During the last two meetings the process of information dissemination was supported by BlueLink through the Internet "TeaHouse" initiative. This initiative provided participants with free facilities and services (PCs, Internet connection, fax service, media relations consultation) for drafting national NGO statements, strategy documents and press releases.

During the past five years there were several attempts to create an environmental NGO information network. Some failed because of the lack of a real cooperative spirit, others ceased to exist after funding ran out. In 1998 a steering group of eight environmental organisations created BlueLink — the information network of Bulgarian environmental NGOs. Transparency, cooperation, being open to all NGOs, responding to NGO user needs and strictly following its mission were the principles that BlueLink followed. As a result, BlueLink became an established networking and information tool for Bulgaria's environmental civil community. In 1999, BlueLink was registered as a foundation by its founder NGOs. Since 2000, BlueLink has been the Bulgarian member of the Association for Progressive Communications, an international umbrella organisation of national NGO networks.

One way in which Bulgarian environmental NGOs cooperate is by actively sharing information regarding urgent environmental issues, legislation and decision-making. NGOs use the NGO mailing list administered by BlueLink as an especially effective and freely accessible communication tool for launching collective actions, campaigning and lobbying, as well

Ninety-six percent of NGOs stated an interest in the establishment of an electronic information network to facilitate communication and cooperation

as finding partners and general support. NGOs cooperate to consolidate their efforts, compile a stronger campaigning platform, increase their bargaining power, reach the general public more effectively and pressure state institutions.

An obstacle to more effective outreach toward society by NGOs is the almost complete absence of any formal or even informal relationships or exchanges between the media and environmental NGOs. Currently, the first steps are being taken towards building a sustainable and productive working relationship between these two sectors, through media-NGO relations and environmental journalism seminars organised by BlueLink.

Cooperation among Bulgarian environmental NGOs occurs in a number of ways: joint project development and implementation, collective campaigning and lobbying, issue-driven pooling of human and financial resources, as well as information exchange. The latter takes place almost exclusively via BlueLink's <ngos@bluelink.net> mailing list, but also through other media, such as the REC's Bulletin and other environmental newsletters.

The <ngos@bluelink.net> mailing list has more than 180 subscribers, who can receive and send messages related to issues of environmental protection and sustainable development. About 20 NGOs are the most active users of the mailing list (they send between three and 10 messages per working day). While this indicator is biased towards organisations with relatively regular access to e-mail, it nevertheless provides valuable input in measuring the level and dynamics of cooperation in the Bulgarian environmental NGO community.

All interviewed NGOs claimed to have regular communication with other NGOs on a local, regional and national level, 94 percent said they had regular interaction with state authorities (national and local), while 93 percent claimed regular contacts with international/foreign NGOs and the same number have connections with scientific/educational institutions (for example universities, schools, scientific institutes and agencies). These figures indicate a fairly high level of communication at the local, national and international levels. The most common cooperative activity, listed by 74 percent of respondents, is project implementation, followed by campaigning (63 percent), fundraising (48 percent) and lobbying (44 percent). The main reasons reported by NGOs for their successful joint activities include:

- pooling of resources;
- more effective distribution of tasks;
- combining different skills and experiences; and
- complementing each other's strong points.

A very small percentage of NGOs reported unpleasant or unsuccessful cooperative experiences, listing as basic reasons:

- the divergence of ideas, attitudes and methods of work;
- overly cumbersome administration and coordination of joint project activities;
- imperfect communication between organisations; and
- a competitive spirit overcoming the cooperative spirit.

NEEDS AND PROBLEMS FOR NETWORK USE

The questionnaire and interview survey showed that 31 percent of NGOs see the “lack of time” as a major problem hindering their active participation in a broad-based platform for networking and cooperation, provided by the establishment of an electronic information network. The problems of insufficient technical capacity as well as English language skills could prevent some NGOs from effectively participating in a South Eastern European electronic network. While the language barrier can equally be considered a human resources issue, as well as a motivational issue, the survey clearly shows an insufficiency in English speaking capacity. Language problems were ranked first with 51 percent — this was above all other motivational problems — 37 percent of respondents qualify their members’ Internet skills as “average,” followed by 33 percent with “excellent” and 4 percent with “low,” while 63 percent say that almost all members have information technology skills. However, 96 percent state that their members need to improve their computer skills.

A greater portion of interviewed NGOs did not perceive a necessity for electronic communication skills training, nor did they recognise frequent personnel turnover as problematic for the environmental movement in general. However, both points were specifically emphasised as a problem by several respondents. They also recognised the need to attract young people to the environmental movement and to provide continued computer training.

Finally, the general attitude among the interviewed NGOs tended towards underestimating the training and human resources needs of their organisations, ranking them after financial and technical problems, which are usually regarded as the most important problems in the environmental NGO sector.



In general, the tendency for NGOs with better computer facilities is to utilise information technology on a broader and more advanced level than NGOs which only have Internet access outside the organisation’s office, or have limited Internet access.

Since small rural NGOs have no or only very basic (sometimes borrowed) equipment, they are forced to limit their use of information technology to infrequent e-mail sessions. Overall, 11 percent of respondents reported one of

the following as a technical obstacle: only one telephone line, a slow/unreliable Internet connection and old equipment. NGOs based in larger towns or cities with better access to the Internet (and to donors) are able to work more effectively with information technology for researching information and for promoting their own activities (33 percent have published Web pages).

Interviewees from NGOs with an environmental education focus (specifically small ones, based in but not limited to schools or universities) argued that acquiring basic computer equipment would greatly increase their chance of involving the youth more extensively and intensively in civil initiatives.

Bulgarian NGOs regarded financial constraints a considerable problem, ranking just behind technical obstacles. Forty-eight percent of the interviewees listed insufficient funds for Internet access as a major obstacle for effective use of the Internet.⁷ Major financial obstacles to active participation in the electronic network include limited financial resources to pay for:

Thirty-eight percent of respondents regard financial obstacles as the most significant in preventing them from participating in an electronic network

- extra staff (27 percent);
- telephone bills (23 percent);
- suitable computer equipment (21percent); and
- training (21 percent).

Overall, 38 percent of respondents regarded financial obstacles as the most significant factor preventing them from participating in an electronic network. Most NGOs need financial or direct support, primarily in acquiring computer equipment and software suitable for the active participation in electronic information exchange. In addition, some NGOs in remote locations also need assistance in covering their telecommunication costs, which tend to be higher in rural than in urban areas.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

Due to legislation which does not encourage business investments in the third sector by providing tax breaks, almost half of the Bulgarian environmental NGOs depend on foreign donors for funding. As a result, the survey shows high NGO interest in information about donors and funding opportunities: 85 percent of respondents search the Internet for funding opportunities, 78 percent would use the electronic network for finding donors, almost half (48 percent) of NGOs cooperate with others for fundraising and 25 percent say that finding information about donors/funding sources will be their primary information interest in the next two years. The extremely high NGO interest in securing funding reflects the difficult financial situation of the majority of Bulgarian environmental NGOs, as well as their perception of insufficient funding as the most significant problem. More than half (52 percent) of the respondents do not plan a computer upgrade, mostly because of a lack of funds (86 percent), not because of a lack of necessity. Sixty percent of the interviewees commented that some form of assistance should be provided by the project (direct equipment grant, training) and by the electronic network itself (connection between NGOs and donors).

The content of the information network should reflect the interests expressed by NGOs in their responses, in order to become a successful and sustainable initiative. Many respondents stated that their active involvement in the electronic network depended on its usefulness in offering information, which is difficult to obtain from elsewhere. NGOs expect the network to function as a forum for exchanging information and feedback between the third sector and financing sources, governments and international financial institutions.

PLANNED NETWORK USE

The interviewed NGO representatives expressed a strong interest in finding partners, both for national and international initiatives; 47 percent stated that they used the Internet for seeking potential partners, a priority preceded only by searching for funding opportunities (85 percent) and for specific work-related information (81 percent). Forty-four percent of the interviewees ranked finding partners as an important priority for their organisation in the next two years, while all of them expressed a positive interest in cooperating with other environmental NGOs from South Eastern Europe (SEE). Of the surveyed

NGOs, 26 out of 27 (96 percent) stated an interest in the establishment of an electronic information network to facilitate communication and cooperation, and said they would become active participants in such a network.

With regard to fundraising, 78 percent of the interviewed NGOs would use an SEE information network primarily for finding funding and partners, communicating with other NGOs and exchanging work-related information. Therefore, the core information services offered by the network should ideally include these elements to become sustainable in the long term.

The NGOs that expressed an interest in becoming active participants in the SEE electronic network also stated that they would pay a membership fee for its services, depending on the quality and price. As computer literacy and awareness develops in the Bulgarian environmental sector, NGO network users would be more willing to pay for information and communication services. This would allow the network to achieve long-term sustainability independent of specific projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROJECT

The need to provide computer training for NGOs is reflected in 30 percent of replies from respondents, in order to enable them to use the network more effectively. Respondents identified two chief areas in which training is necessary: Internet skills (67 percent) and more specialised Web publishing/graphic design skills (19 percent). Some NGOs also stated a need to acquire or improve skills for using GIS, MS Access and databases, video software and Windows. Some NGOs suggested staff exchange as a tool for transferring skills and sharing experience.

BlueLink's experience from operating a large NGO mailing list and Web site shows that, contrary to the opinions expressed by some interviewees, NGOs require improvement in their on-line communication skills. A respondent strongly suggested organising on-going training, not limited to a single event, but structured in several phases, which should target younger members of NGOs and thus serve to revitalise the environmental NGO sector.

In addition to general computer training, education seminars should focus on specific ways in which environmental NGOs can use networks strategically to enhance their impact and cooperation. Training should serve to inform NGOs about how a common electronic network can enhance their activities, about the interdependence of the processes of providing and finding information, as well as the benefits of sharing information with others.

Most NGOs recognise the interrelation of financial and technical issues (no funds — no equipment). However, there is an evident tendency to overestimate the importance of the financial factor as the only significant problem in effective network use. This preoccupation of NGOs with financial obstacles leaves important issues in the background, such as the need for training, leading many interviewees to state that once they have the equipment, members “will learn quickly.” This reflects the typical “self-taught” approach of Bulgarian computer users, who prefer to “learn by doing.” One respondent said that members who had undergone computer training (which is rarely done by Bulgarian users) transferred their skills to the rest of the members.

The majority of NGOs cannot afford to buy the software necessary for their work. This technical impediment limits the effective use of their available hardware and human resources for strategic communication and information services. Bulgaria has a high level of software

piracy, reaching 78 percent in 2000.⁸ Not being able to purchase a full package software product, NGOs are often forced to download trial or demonstration versions of programmes they need for their daily operation. This problem is recognised by all surveyed NGOs.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROJECT INCLUDE:

“Training-of-trainers” seminars would be important for the long-term existence of the established electronic networks, even after the completion of the project. Strengthening the training capacity and qualifications of the network would allow it to offer training services for other NGOs, thus providing it with a means of self-sustainability.

Twenty percent of respondents commented that the project should beware of allowing the monopolisation and concentration of assistance and resources by a few strong organisations, which already have sufficient capacity. Rather, assistance should target (in terms of budgeting) smaller active NGOs, working at a local level.

NGOs also advised project organisers to avoid supporting “one-man band” organisations.

Finally, almost all interviewed NGOs expressed concern over possible information overload and recommended the structuring of the content and information flow into categories to facilitate finding useful information.

Croatia

By Jagoda Munic, Zelena Akcija (Green Action)

INTRODUCTION

This country chapter is based on interviews with 14 environmental NGOs. In addition, the project was presented to 20 NGOs at a national meeting. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, the rest by telephone. A couple of NGOs sent back the questionnaire via e-mail. Interviewees consisted of NGO staff or representatives. The survey was conducted by an environmental NGO, Zelena Akcija (Green Action).

GENERAL SITUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS IN CROATIA

According to the REC's NGO Directory,² as of July 2001 there were 150 environmental NGOs in Croatia — 97, if scouting and hikers' organisations are excluded. About a third can be regarded as very active, with a total membership of between 2000 and 3000 people. However, the lack of skilled activists and financial resources has prevented environmental groups from increasing their membership and local support.

One has to bear in mind that after the fall of communism, Croatia faced four years of war and another five years in a political climate which had a negative impact on the development of civil society. For example, the government focused on one environmental NGO, Lijepa nasa (Our Beautiful). This organisation was involved in environmental education at schools across Croatia.

In spite of these conditions the environmental movement in Croatia managed to undertake several successful local and national campaigns. As a consequence, its recognition grew steadily in the media and among the general public. A public opinion poll of a governmental research institute¹⁰ discovered in 1999 that the environmental movement had higher public trust and confidence than trade unions or the independent press, and that 3.3 percent of all citizens would consider joining an environmental organisation.

EXISTING NETWORKING AND COOPERATION

According to the survey results, Croatian environmental NGOs on average cooperate with 14 other NGOs in the country (ranging from 2-50 per NGO). The average number of international NGO partners is eight. Two of the surveyed NGOs do not cooperate across national borders, while one has active contacts with as many as 40 foreign NGOs. Environmental NGOs cooperate on average with the same number of scientific and educational institutions as with foreign NGOs (ranging from 0-40 partners). Croatian environmental NGOs also work together with governmental and public authorities: on average with six (ranging from 1-15). Among the surveyed NGOs, 57 percent are active locally, 64 percent regionally, 57 percent nationally and 36 percent internationally.

In 1994 the Green Alliance Croatian environmental NGO umbrella network was set up. However, its activity decreased soon after its creation. To fill the gap for a nationwide environmental NGO umbrella organisation, the Green Forum was established in 1997. Its members meet on an annual basis and it serves as a national forum for discussion as well as for planning national campaigns. At the time of writing 20 NGOs are members of the

All NGOs expressed their willingness to cooperate more on a national and international basis

NGOs highlighted the lack of equipment and training in networking as important obstacles that hinder taking advantage of the Internet

network while two others are observers (they cannot vote but can take part in discussions, meetings and campaigns). Seven NGOs have been chosen to coordinate the network through its steering committee.

During the course of the interviews and questionnaires NGOs clearly stressed the importance of cooperation among NGOs in the country as well as internationally. None of them mentioned that they saw other NGOs as a threat or competition. Only one NGO noted that it had language problems with international cooperation.

International environmental cooperation usually takes place with individual partner NGOs or with members of the South Eastern European Environmental NGO Network (SEEENN). For example, Zelena Akcija (Green Action) is a member of Friends of the Earth and also coordinates WWF¹¹ activities in Croatia. Green Action together with the Ecologists' Movement of Macedonia (DEM), runs the secretariat of SEEENN.

In the northern part of the country an NGO federation named Drava League was formed in 2001 to conduct campaigns and projects to protect the Drava River. The 10 Croatian NGO members of the Drava League cooperate with Hungarian, Slovenian and Austrian NGOs. During the interviews about 10 NGOs reported cooperating with partner environmental NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 1999 seven NGOs formed the Green Phone Network, which provides an environmental hotline service for citizens to report local environmental problems. These NGOs also produce joint publications and organise campaigns. Currently the network is in the process of expanding into other South Eastern European countries.



At present there is no environmental NGO electronic network in Croatia. However, environmental NGOs already have some experience in networking through the ZaMir NGO network (ZaMir is an international NGO electronic network dedicated to social change, primarily peace). It provided support to NGOs through Web page and mailing list hosting as well as an electronic NGO newsletter. One also needs to mention the Green

Week environmental news agency, which produces an electronic environmental newsletter distributed to nearly 300 recipients each week. During the interviews both ZaMir and Green Week showed an interest in joining forces and becoming involved in developing an environmental NGO electronic network in the country.

Ten of the interviewed NGOs use the Internet for general communication on a daily basis, while four of them still prefer posting and faxing to e-mailing. Ten NGOs also subscribe to the above-mentioned electronic newsletter, while a further eight reported reading other on-line environmental magazines. NGOs primarily use the Internet for communicating with other organisations (11 NGOs), on-line fundraising (nine NGOs), gathering environmental and general information (seven NGOs) and Web publishing (six NGOs).

Interviewed environmental NGOs reported cooperating with other environmental NGOs in joint fundraising (11 NGOs), project implementation (13 NGOs), campaigning and lobbying (eight NGOs) and developing strategic action plans (one NGO). They reported having mostly positive experiences from cooperation and identified the success of these joint activities in close coordination and intensive communication, but above all, in common interest. One NGO pointed out problems in electronic communication, as many of its partners did not rely on using the Internet.

In addition to these joint activities, all interviewed NGOs expressed their willingness to cooperate more on a national and international level. Their motivation is primarily joining forces, running joint projects and exchanging information and experience. Out of the interviewed NGOs, members of the Drava League, the Green Forum and Green Phone Network showed the most interest in further international cooperation.

NEEDS AND PROBLEMS FOR NETWORK USE

Although some electronically based cooperation already exists, all interviewed NGOs clearly pointed out the need to improve on-line cooperation and information flow. They highlighted the lack of equipment and the need for training as important obstacles to taking advantage of the Internet. Practically all NGOs face the problem of a lack of technical equipment in the office as well as a lack of funds to pay for at least a part-time network administrator. Smaller, volunteer-based NGOs usually do not have a computer and use computers belonging to activists. On the other hand, larger NGOs tend to have older equipment and staff members often have to line up to access a computer with an Internet connection.

Regarding training and capacity, most of the NGO staff know how to use e-mail and have basic computer skills, but lack expertise in Web page administration and in computer maintenance.

All in all, the following items present the most difficulties to Croatian environmental NGOs, in order of priority:

- lack of suitable office equipment;
- lack of trained network administrators;
- insufficient Internet connections; and
- lack of computer maintenance skills.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

In the course of the interviews and questionnaire surveys NGOs clearly stressed their interest in further increasing cooperation both nationally and internationally. In fact, none of them mentioned that they saw other NGOs as a threat or as competition. All surveyed NGOs are looking forward to a Croatian environmental NGO electronic network that may benefit them by providing a platform for increased and easier cooperation.

Most interviewed NGOs see support in acquiring computer hardware, and some the possibility of funding for hiring extra staff, as potential benefits of the project. By increasing the presence of NGOs on the Web and Internet in general, environmental NGOs hope to increase the interest of computer companies in providing technical and financial support to them.

All NGOs are looking forward to a Croatian environmental NGO electronic network that provides a platform for increased and easier cooperation

Seventy-one percent of respondents listed on-line fundraising as the highest priority in their planned network use

The following list contains the expectations of the interviewed NGOs from this project, in order of priority:

- facilitating fast and efficient information flow;
- improving the NGOs' human capacity to build a network that functions well;
- providing technical assistance;
- better access for local environmental NGOs to national media;
- new partnerships and contacts;
- education for Web publishing;
- more intense networking in the South Eastern European region; and
- funding for telecommunications costs.

PLANNED NETWORK USE

Most of the interviewees specified information exchange on general environmental problems and facilitation of joint projects as the main planned field of network use. In contrast to the results of personal interviews, questionnaire respondents listed on-line fundraising as the highest priority in their planned network use (71 percent of respondents) and 57 percent designated searching for international project partners as their second most important objective for being involved in an electronic network.

All in all, survey participants listed the following priorities: working on global environmental issues (27 percent), increased funds for joint projects (26 percent), effective on-line communication (26 percent) and strengthened personal interaction (21 percent). It was a widely held opinion that a network could only be successful and sustainable if participating NGOs found a common interest in being actively involved. As one interviewee said: "An environmental NGO electronic network is a useful tool in itself, but it is only the first step in the process of improving information exchange and running joint projects."

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROJECT

Most interview participants recommended that further work should be built on existing foundations. One suggestion was to build on the work of the aforementioned Green Forum or Green Phone Network, mainly because NGOs participating in their activities have already gained some experience in networking. They have conducted many joint projects and campaigns in the last few years, which in itself is a good indicator of the possibility of achieving lasting project results.

Some NGO representatives proposed assigning one NGO to host a computer server and employ someone to coordinate network activities. Another idea was that the project's national NGO steering committee should assess the amount of equipment needed by NGOs. In this way a solid network hardware foundation can be laid down during the first two years of the project.

Another recommendation was to facilitate cooperation with other similar initiatives, even if they are not run by environmental NGOs. Examples included cooperating with the publisher of Green Week environmental newsletter or with Internet service providers. Involving an environmental news agency is expected to bring in experience in information exchange, networking and Internet culture. Facilitating negotiations with some Internet service providers could help NGOs with expertise, financial support, Web site hosting as well as Internet and Intranet design.

FYR Macedonia

By Zlatko Samardziev, REC Country Office FYR Macedonia

There is an evident need for technical training on on-line collaboration

INTRODUCTION

In March 2001 questionnaires were sent to around 150 environmental NGOs in FYR Macedonia. Although only approximately 60 responded, it is safe to assume around 70 environmental NGOs are active in Macedonia. About 30 of these are also members of the Ecologists' Movement of Macedonia (DEM), which is an umbrella organisation of Macedonian environmental NGOs. Nineteen NGOs were also interviewed in order to gather more information for this report.

GENERAL SITUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS IN FYR MACEDONIA

Although the first environmental NGO (the Association of the Ecological Scientists of Macedonia) was established in Skopje in 1972, nearly all of them emerged after the political changes of 1989.

In addition to those NGOs that focus primarily on solving environmental problems, there are also several NGOs in related fields. They are classified as mountaineering associations, scout groups, scientific research associations and other specialised groups. These organisations have rather specific target groups and memberships.

Even though many environmental NGOs are relatively developed and well known in their communities, a considerable number of them still need support to build their capacities. Macedonian NGOs are located throughout the country. Almost a third of the organisations are located in Skopje, but surprisingly the most active NGOs are located in rural towns. The only exception is in the southeastern part of the country where there are only a few, relatively inactive NGOs.



Most Macedonian NGOs are less than seven years old.

Macedonian environmental NGOs are typically engaged in environmental education, training, lobbying, disseminating environmental information, raising public awareness and symbolic activities such as clean-up actions and reforestation projects. A small number of them are active in scientific research and technological design.

Almost half of Macedonia's NGOs have annual budgets of less than EUR 500 and almost one-quarter have annual budgets ranging from EUR 5,000 to EUR 50,000. Nearly all NGOs are financed through project based funding.

EXISTING NETWORKING AND COOPERATION

So far most cooperative activities were carried out within partnerships for project implementation, campaigning and fundraising. Cooperative activities range from small-scale initiatives to those on a national and international level. Environmental NGOs tend to cooperate on a local level in the areas of environmental protection, environmental education, environmental legislation and eco-tourism. National or international cooperation tends to occur for activities such as celebrating an international environment day or addressing a global environmental issue.

DEM members cooperate to address national, regional and local environmental issues. These efforts range from proposing solutions to various environmental problems to organising public protests.

DEM is the only organisation which holds annual meetings because there is no other platform for countrywide cooperation.

Besides cooperating on a national level through DEM, NGOs have also formed some smaller, issue-driven coalitions. Recent examples include NGOs joining forces on solid waste management issues or in bird studies and protection. Such coalitions receive financial and logistical support from international organisations.

NEEDS AND PROBLEMS FOR NETWORK USE

The majority of interviewed NGOs have PCs with modems. In most cases they received these through various donor-funded projects. Unfortunately, once a given project is over NGOs face great difficulties in maintaining and upgrading these computers. NGOs are often forced to cancel their Internet subscription as well. In general NGO members access the Internet at an Internet café. Therefore practically all NGOs specified the scarcity of funding as the single most important issue limiting network use. The interviewed NGOs called for support to pay phone bills, to purchase new equipment and to upgrade existing equipment.

Survey participants listed the following technical problems as the most important (in order of importance):

- lack of suitable computer equipment in the office;
- unstable or unreliable telephone lines; and
- no Internet service provider in their town.

An evaluation of the answers to questionnaire items about training needs shows an evident need for technical training on what an electronic network should contain and how it should be used for cooperation. In the case of international cooperation the language barrier was reported as an obstacle. Interviewees also highlighted the importance of training in the following areas (in order of importance):

- general computer skills;
- efficient use of Internet services;
- on-line communication and writing style;
- creating and maintaining e-mail discussion lists; and
- creating and maintaining Web pages and software.

A functional and efficient electronic network is expected to enhance and ease cooperation at all levels and help raising public awareness

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

The survey results demonstrate that the main interest of the NGOs is to look for project partners in international projects, to improve their computer skills and to look for information about donors and funds.

An NGO information network could help them to work on joint and transboundary projects, to raise funds for collaboration and to ease day-to-day informal communications. NGOs perceive the following issues as the main benefits of this project (without rank):

- to learn from each others' experiences and mistakes;
- to share best practices in solving environmental problems;
- to facilitate the overall development of the Macedonian NGO community and strengthen its sustainability;
- to cooperate on international projects;
- to provide Internet access and funds to cover telephone bills;

as well as

- more efficient outreach to the general public;
- increased information exchange within the NGO community and more information on funding sources;
- better access to training, technical advice and exchange of expertise;
- more knowledge on current environmental issues; and
- easier and faster communication.

PLANNED NETWORK USE

The main areas for networked cooperation range from presenting environmental problems on a higher level through strengthening public environmental awareness to creating national coalitions on certain environmental issues and problems (for example solid waste management). A functional and efficient electronic network is expected to enhance and ease cooperation at all levels, support the establishment of coalitions and help raise public awareness. NGOs specified the following areas as their main fields of interest in using a network: environmental protection in general, environmental law, environmental education, eco-tourism and energy saving. Regarding their willingness to provide active input into the on-line environmental community, NGOs expressed their commitment to invest up to 2-4 days per month to provide information to the network.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROJECT

Interviewees had several recommendations and ideas for the project organisers. Among these, training programmes, financial support and technical assistance were mentioned most frequently. They also recommended focusing on the following issues:

- provision of computer equipment;
- training in network communication;
- providing more disk space for Web pages;
- encouraging as many NGOs as possible to participate in the network;
- focusing exclusively on environmental NGOs;
- channelling all e-mail correspondence and on-line discussion; and
- launching an action-alert electronic mailing list to combat environmental accidents.

Romania

By Rozalia Klara Bako, Mihaly Bako, Emilian Burdusel
(StrawberryNet, information network of Romanian environmental NGOs)

There is a clear need for joint efforts in fundraising, project implementation and environmental policy

INTRODUCTION

This country report is based on an analysis of 51 environmental NGOs active in Romania. The surveyed NGOs represented various fields of activity and geographical regions.

GENERAL SITUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS IN ROMANIA

In the main cities of the country, such as Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Targu-Mures, Galati or Ploiesti, NGO coalitions of 8-10 local organisations exert pressure on environmental policy makers. In most cases these coalitions lobby against urban development projects that contradict the principles of sustainable development. Regarding NGO activities on a national level, this year's (2001) annual Environmental NGO Forum formed working groups focusing on specific topics, such as the national environmental fund, energy policies and sustainable transportation. However, since funding opportunities from abroad decreased after 1997, this was the first national Environmental NGO Forum held since then. Environmental activists reported a decline of the national movement and a change of focus from national to local level. During the last (not only environmental) national NGO forums in 1998, 1999 and 2000 the forum agenda also included the most important environmental issues. Environmental NGOs put these on the agenda of all NGOs and promoted them as NGO forum resolutions.



EXISTING NETWORKING AND COOPERATION

In 2000, Romanian NGOs discovered the efficiency of lobbying through mailing lists, using them to facilitate campaigns for protected areas and species, and as a forum for exchanging ideas on amendments to the Romanian Protected Areas Law.

Dialogue between governmental institutions and environmental NGOs gathered momentum in 2000 as part of the larger social dialogue within the EU integration process. However, this process is still slow, which can be attributed to the considerable lack of trust on both sides.

All surveyed organisations declared that they cooperated with other NGOs primarily for fundraising and project implementation. The interviewed NGOs demonstrated a significant willingness and openness to communicate and cooperate with other organisations. The highest priority in terms of communication and cooperation was designated for the search for partners for international projects (rated first or second by a total of 20 organisations out of 51, chosen from a total of 10 alternative answers).

During the interviews it also became apparent that there are large differences between environmental organisations in terms of partnership potential. Active NGOs have developed a stronger partnership potential than less active ones. An active NGO was defined by two criteria: visibility, both on the funding and project market, as well as initiative potential in terms of taking action and involving other organisations in environmental change. According to this definition of an active NGO, there are currently 25-30 active environmental organisations in Romania. The interviewees revealed that there is a clear need for joint efforts in terms of fundraising, project implementation and environmental policy.

As for the motivating factors of partnership, the following answers were given:

- to increase organisational competence;
- to share scarce resources;
- to expand the areas of activity by learning from others;
- to fill an empty niche in the market;
- to join forces for better results;
- to be part of a powerful and important process; and
- to build on existing healthy relations.

Cooperation between NGOs, local councils, city halls and local environmental protection agencies has been more successful than cooperation on a national level. There are encouraging examples of partnership agreements signed by Romanian NGOs and local governmental bodies. Interviewed NGOs keep in contact with an average of 23 environmental NGOs from Romania, 11 from abroad, 16 governmental institutions and 20 scientific and educational institutions. The main alternative to networking and large-scale cooperation was informal personal cooperation in common fields of interest and areas of competence (10 percent of the visited NGOs).

When asked about their willingness to allocate time for Web content development, 75 percent of the questioned NGOs claimed they would be ready to invest 2-4 days per month.

NEEDS AND PROBLEMS FOR NETWORK USE

NGOs specified the lack of appropriate information technology equipment in the office as the main technical issue limiting electronic communication. More than half of the interviewed organisations access the Internet from cafés or from home and pay for it from their private budget. A very active NGO from Cluj-Napoca involved in local policy-making and building coalitions reported that it could not afford to search for work-related information on the Internet due to a lack of funds.

The main human resource need seems to be the lack of computer-literate staff for networking and Web publishing, within the more general context of an overall lack of staff. In order of priority, the main financial obstacles limiting further progress are the lack of funds for paying extra staff, purchasing computer equipment and, for some organisations, paying telephone bills.

NGOs see the most important benefit of this project in running joint projects and improving international cooperation

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

NGOs see the most important benefit of this project as working in joint, internationally funded projects as well as in improving international cooperation. Several of the interviewed organisations can provide information of public interest to other organisations, for example databases, case studies, articles and background information on specific topics. These organisations expect to benefit from the project by increasing their capacity to publish their information electronically.

The project is expected to help NGOs by increasing the volume and type of information exchanged and to facilitate communication among NGOs through interactive Web pages and publishing opportunities. The project is also expected to facilitate the establishment of NGO



working groups and to foster the development of a virtual NGO community. A considerable number of the interviewed organisations also recognised the increasing importance of electronic communications in lobbying. They expect better communication with the authorities and more successful lobbying as a benefit of the project.

The majority of Romanian environmental NGOs are experiencing financial difficulties. Therefore the organisations are expecting financial help to increase their institu-

tional capacity to communicate, for example by investing in human resources, covering telecommunication costs and upgrading or purchasing equipment and software.

In spite of technical, human resource and fundraising difficulties, the Romanian environmental NGO community is aware of the quick, cost-effective and environmentally friendly communication opportunities offered by computer-based information networks. On-line communication is seen as a rapidly growing tool that will soon make a difference in environmental policy making. A regional networking project could empower this new culture of communication.

PLANNED NETWORK USE

In general, NGOs plan to use a network by extending its present role. Currently the Romanian environmental NGOs use it primarily for finding general information for their work (80 percent), cooperation with other NGOs (66 percent) and Web publishing (49 percent). On-line campaigning, lobbying, on-line fundraising and other, more advanced applications of electronic information networks still have to be developed. Joint on-line project work is also at a rather early stage of development.

In general, the expressed priorities of planned network use of the interviewed NGOs were rather balanced. However, searching the Internet for funding opportunities and to obtain information about donors and funds was designated as a priority by 18 percent of the inter-

viewed NGOs. Most of the Romanian environmental NGOs are dependent on (mostly foreign) donors for funding. Unfortunately current legislation does not offer the corporate sector tax breaks for supporting non-profit organisations.

Fifteen percent of the interviewed NGOs mentioned plans to use networks for marketing their organisations and exchanging environmental information on a regular basis. The interviewed NGOs also expressed a strong interest in finding partners for international initiatives. NGOs are planning to use the network to gain access to environmental information (11 percent) and to publish environmental information on the Web (10 percent).

All interviewed NGOs expressed a willingness to put public information such as general data (80 percent), articles (70 percent), case studies (66 percent) and news (52 percent) on the Web on a regular basis.

The interviewed NGOs consider electronic networks an effective way to disseminate information. Depending on the amount of information and resources available, they are willing to invest 2-4 days per month to provide input into the network.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROJECT

Even though half of the surveyed NGOs reported technical and infrastructure difficulties of connectivity, they mainly expect this project to facilitate content development and Web publishing (21 percent). This figure suggests that Romanian NGOs have already recognised that technical problems are not the main bottleneck in NGO communications; instead, NGOs need above all to improve their on-line communications culture as well as their technical skills. Therefore they recommend that the project organisers develop training programmes that will enhance the impact and efficiency of environmental NGOs. Training should raise their awareness about how a common electronic network can provide additional value to their activities. It should also help them to understand the process of providing and finding information, as well as to see the benefits of sharing information with others. Several organisations foresee information overload and therefore requested training and software tools to enable them to structure information into categories.

The survey has revealed a general lack of human resources. Therefore NGOs have called for simple, automated Web publishing tools which will enable them to publish their information quickly and efficiently. The project should facilitate the development and sharing of such tools in the NGO community.

A large number of the interviewed NGO representatives recommend that the project support the creation of an on-line NGO community, the development of interactive environmental education methodologies and even a network of young environmental activists (20 percent of interviewees).

The majority of NGOs cannot afford to buy software for their work. The high level of software piracy in Romania has led to an increase in the strict enforcement of the use of licenced software. The result is that NGOs face having to download trial or demonstration versions of programmes they need for daily operations. The project could help either by purchasing software or by training NGOs to use free packages such as Star Office for Linux.

Yugoslavia

By Radoje Lausevic, REC Country Office Yugoslavia

NGOs stated that cooperation leads to better results from their activities

INTRODUCTION

This country report is based on a questionnaire survey and personal interviews with 45 environmental NGOs. The selected NGOs represent different types of organisations (active locally, regionally or nationally), with varied areas of interest (such as nature protection, environmental protection, environmental education, public access to information) and operating in different areas of the country (the capital, large cities, rural areas).

GENERAL SITUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS IN YUGOSLAVIA

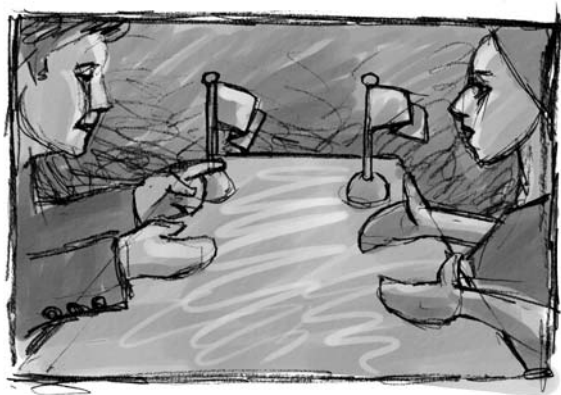
The international isolation of Yugoslavia in the last 10 years has affected the NGO community, which suffered from the limitations on exchange programmes and international networking.

At present there are approximately 1,000 NGOs in Yugoslavia, and roughly 130 of these have an environmental focus. Environmental NGOs represent one of the largest and most recognised groups of the non-governmental sector in Yugoslavia. On average, Yugoslav environmental NGOs have more active members than their counterparts in other Central and Eastern European countries. Many of them claim to have more than 1,000 active members, although this figure should be treated with caution.

Most NGOs are very young: 80 percent were officially registered during the 1990s. Approximately half of the environmental NGOs have PCs, fax machines or printers, and access to the Internet.

Environmental NGOs mostly engage in protecting endangered species, cleaning actions, environmental education, environmental impact assessments, and environmental information dissemination or networking.

Despite circumstances which made their work more complicated and difficult in the last decade, Yugoslav environmental NGOs have proved vigorous enough to endure. Quite understandably, however, their number has decreased, and now only some players and a reduced number of the strongest grassroots organisations remain.



The vigour of the Yugoslav environmental NGO movement became apparent when the REC Country Office Yugoslavia started its activities in the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe (REReP). Participating NGOs have shown considerable interest in many REReP activities. So far six NGO gatherings have taken place within the framework of the REReP, two of them held on a national scale in the

course of six months. A national REReP NGO representative was elected in December 2000 as well as two regional coordinators in January and February 2001, for Central Serbia and Vojvodina respectively.

EXISTING NETWORKS AND COOPERATION

Yugoslav environmental NGOs perceive cooperation with domestic NGOs, foreign NGOs and EU organisations as critically important in solving environmental problems. This fact in itself demonstrates the need for cooperation. NGOs mostly cooperate in project implementation and campaigning and to a lesser degree in lobbying and fundraising.

The main reasons given for cooperation were:

- exchanging information and ideas;
- working on common ideas and goals;
- sharing best practices;
- improving professionalism; and
- working together for mutual benefit.

Interviewed NGOs stated that cooperation led to better results from their activities, helped them implement projects and initiatives, facilitated stronger public pressure and paved the way for further cooperation in projects.

According to the results of the survey the majority of NGOs in Yugoslavia have contacts with 5-10 national environmental NGOs and contacts with up to four international environmental organisations (NGOs and donors). Most NGOs in Yugoslavia have contacts with 2-4 governmental institutions/public authorities and up to five scientific and educational institutions.

Environmental NGOs in Yugoslavia have already demonstrated a strong desire for mutual cooperation. One result has been an electronic discussion list (REReP-YU@ibiss.bg.ac.yu) that was set up in January 2001. Although it was originally intended mainly for discussions on REReP-related subjects, it soon became a tool for general information exchange on regional and national environmental issues. It proved that such a communication channel was necessary and that both the discussion list and the meetings helped the environmental organisations to learn about each other and the possibilities for cooperation. The discussion list has given rise to several joint projects, one of which involves as many as 14 environmental NGOs. Better cooperation between environmental NGOs has meant the sector plays a more significant role in dealing with important environmental issues.

International cooperation of Yugoslavian environmental NGOs is mostly related to international organisations and the donor community. Contacts are established directly or via local representatives of different international institutions or organisations. In addition, international cooperation is carried out through joint projects, mostly tackling issues and problems of mutual concern in cross-border areas.

NEEDS AND PROBLEMS FOR NETWORK USE

NGOs face the most difficulties with official registration, weak organisational management, insufficient funding, limited access to computers and a lack of volunteers.

According to 37 out of the 45 interviewed NGOs, the lack of suitable computer equipment in the office represents the largest technical obstacle limiting network use. Fifteen of them also reported that they do not have access to the Internet outside of the office either. In those cases where NGOs do have access to the Internet, unreliable telephone lines are also an impediment (15 out of 45 NGOs). Two NGOs reported that their towns do not have an Internet service provider.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

The surveyed organisations have high expectations from the project to exchange and gain access to environmental or work related information, as well as to locate information about donors and funds. Altogether 37 of the interviewed NGOs listed the possibility to exchange ideas, information and best practices as the most important benefit of networking. A majority of them also considered enabling joint project implementation (35 NGOs) and joint campaigning (28 NGOs) as the most important benefits of this project.

PLANNED NETWORK USE

The majority of interviewed NGOs stated that they plan to use a network to improve international cooperation with other environmental NGOs, primarily in the neighbouring countries. Such cross-border activities would include working on internationally funded joint projects and exchanging ideas, information and best practices. In addition to formal cooperation, informal communication, such as on-line discussions lists and private e-mails, was mentioned as equally important.

Most interviewed NGOs stated that joint project implementation would be their main reason to join a future network. Currently these NGOs typically work together with other NGOs on a smaller scale, and therefore electronic networks are not always essential for day-to-day communication. A future network is planned as a way to extend the geographical scope and professional reach of NGO cooperation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROJECT

The project should focus on the following activities to improve the present situation (in order of priority):

- providing suitable computer equipment to NGOs;
- enabling NGOs in Yugoslavia to reach the same level of performance as that of NGOs in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe;
- improving the communication and exchange of information between NGOs in Yugoslavia and with the rest of the world;
- organising training programmes on how to publish information on-line and on how to use mailing lists and discussion groups for more efficient cooperation;

- organising training programmes on the basics of distance learning and further training; and
- achieving lasting progress through providing “training of trainers” seminars.

Such technical support and know-how transfer would enable the representatives of environmental NGOs in Yugoslavia to make the best of computer resources and to enlarge the group of potential network users.

Kosovo

(Currently under UN interim administration)

By Blerim Vela, REC Field Office Kosovo

INTRODUCTION

REC Field Office staff conducted interviews with nine environmental NGOs, covering every region in Kosovo. In this process, every region of Kosovo was covered. Most of the interviewed NGOs are active throughout the territory.

GENERAL SITUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS IN KOSOVO

During the recent conflict, civil society, including the environmental civil society, was completely disrupted. Immediately after the end of hostilities the international community put a lot of effort into rebuilding society and developing its supporting institutions. At present most grassroots activities are dependent on foreign financial aid, and the environmental sector is no exception. The activities of environmental NGOs depend to a large extent on support from international donors and organisations. Most NGOs have an average annual budget of EUR 1,000-2,000.

There are 22 active environmental and related NGOs. This number is growing steadily. The general situation for environmental NGOs is rather difficult due to the current political circumstances and inter-ethnic conflict.

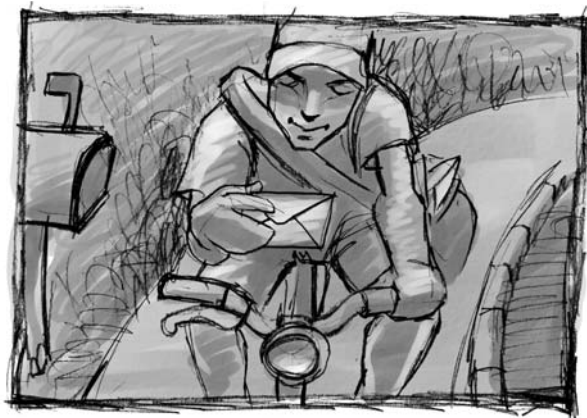
The current situation in Kosovo means environmental issues are not considered a priority. As a consequence, environmental NGOs in Kosovo have a very limited influence on society and the UNMIK interim administration. However, through joint efforts and actions the potential exists to increase the influence of environmental NGOs in the future.

EXISTING NETWORKING AND COOPERATION

Networking activities already exist among environmental NGOs. At present, however, these activities do not rely on electronic networks due to the lack of equipment, limited net-

working skills and often a lack of basic infrastructure such as offices or good phone lines. The interviewed organisations keep in touch with an average of six organisations every month; some of these organisations are environmental and operate on a regional and Kosovo level.

There are regional meetings every month in the five Kosovo regions: Prishtina (Central region), Prizren (Southern region), Peja/Pec (Western region), Gjilan/Gnjilane (Eastern region) and Mitrovica



(Northern region). A Kosovo-wide NGO networking meeting was held in June 2001 in Peja/Pec (this initiative was financially supported by a Local Grants Programme of the REC Field Office Kosovo).

A regional board of NGOs was set up by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to help NGOs coordinate their work. This board includes environmental as well as non-environmental NGOs.

When looking at the current, rather low level of development of environmental NGOs, it is surprising that the NGOs claim to have quite a high degree of interaction on an international level. They mention keeping in touch with an average of five foreign organisations. However, these are only contacts, and there is no concrete action behind them. The lack of concrete actions and/or joint projects can be explained by the limited means of environmental NGOs in Kosovo to engage in as many projects as they would like. Issues that motivate NGOs to cooperate include project implementation, fundraising, lobbying and campaigning. So far all cooperative actions were regarded as successful in which NGOs shared their experience and ideas.

NEEDS AND PROBLEMS FOR NETWORK USE

Most environmental NGOs do not have the proper equipment to benefit from electronic networking. The lack of office equipment and the fact that Kosovo has rather unreliable telephone lines makes it hard to take full advantage of the project. Therefore urgent action is required. There is a great need for computer hardware and even a reliable Internet service provider (ISP). Kosovo boasts three local ISPs, but their services are not very reliable. The servers often break down and may be off-line for several days. There is a choice between a rented line and a dial up connection.

All interviewed NGOs saw this project as highly beneficial to the countries of South Eastern Europe, especially those in a post-war situation. However, computer networking is presently unknown to environmental groups in Kosovo. All interviewed NGOs felt there was a great need for training in general computer skills, Internet software and English, and recommended that these should be the topics of a training course. Many NGOs also highlighted the need to pay for additional staff members.

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

The project was positively received by the interviewees. They have high hopes and expectations from this project and look forward to more national and international cooperation. But most importantly, they expect a general empowerment of the environmental NGO sector in terms of capacity and technical infrastructure.

PLANNED NETWORK USE

Most NGOs would use a network to seek project partners for international projects and to find information about donors and funds. They also expressed considerable interest in other areas, such as sharing successful project case studies and best practices, developing skills for using information technology, exchanging environmental information, as well as getting involved in training activities, environmental protection, project implementation, environmental monitoring and public awareness raising. Some of their more specific interests include professional assistance, urban waste management and sustainable development.

NGOs look forward to a general empowerment of the environmental NGO sector in capacity building and technical infrastructure

Twelve percent of the interviewed NGOs plan to use networks for marketing their organisations and exchanging environmental information on a regular basis. Considering the amount of information and available resources at their disposal, they are willing to invest up to four days per month to provide input into the network.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROJECT

All interviewees recommended that the REC's Kosovo Field Office should install and maintain a suitable network infrastructure. Furthermore, the office should implement the project for the first year of operation while training Kosovo NGOs to take over the function of network management from the second year. In this way local NGOs will be given a year to "learn the ropes."

Because of the fact that many environmental NGOs do not have proper equipment to participate in this project, the organisers have to ensure that NGOs have regular access to a computer. A training programme to teach the basics of electronic networking as well as basic English language skills related to using computers must accompany this.

All in all, the following actions are recommended:

- providing high-quality training for NGOs;
- giving NGOs the opportunity to learn from other countries with experience in computer networking; and
- providing financial help for the network manager.

The recommended focus for training is general software skills and providing a better understanding of the concept of electronic networking. A team of local and international experts should provide this training. The second focus would be English language courses. Since most NGOs do not have their own office and computers, the training should also include practice sessions.

Recommended priorities for assistance include providing dial-up or leased Internet access that is also accessible to NGOs based outside the capital. The REC Field Office Kosovo would be



in charge of hosting and maintaining the equipment. This arrangement would ensure equal accessibility for all environmental NGOs.

It was suggested that NGOs be offered the opportunity to implement international projects in cooperation with other SEE/CEE countries. In this way the project would achieve a lasting impact and the objective of transboundary environmental NGO cooperation would be realised.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview methodology

1) DISTRIBUTION OF QUESTIONNAIRES

- Telephone or face-to-face interviews were conducted with 25-30 defined organisations in each country and region.
- Questionnaires were distributed electronically through e-mail and Web pages.

2) CHOICE OF ORGANISATIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

Between 25 and 30 organisations per country should be contacted directly for the interview procedure before the questionnaire can be sent out via e-mail. If possible, the organisations should represent all the different types of NGOs in the country, namely:

- locally operating organisations;
- regionally operating organisations;
- nationally operating organisations;
- internationally operating organisations;
- different work focus such as nature protection, sustainable development, environmental protection, environmental education, public information, environmental lobby groups, etc.; and
- operating in different areas of the country: capital, rural areas, cities, industrial areas.

3) INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

- Interviews should be conducted in the local language and the questionnaire should also be translated. It is recommended that two or more people from the organisation should be interviewed at the same time to create an atmosphere conducive to discussion and reflect a more accurate picture of the organisation. Only presidents or high-level personnel might be biased.
- Questions should be asked verbally and answers should be noted down by the interviewers. Please mark all the correct answers with a cross. In most cases the questionnaire allows for several possible answers. It might be useful to note down all comments made while answering the questions. This might help to make sense of the answers later or even change the way questions are asked.
- When asking open questions, the interviewers should try to let NGO staff develop their own ideas. To encourage this, a lot of “w” questions - why, when, where, what, who - should be asked. Of these, “why” is by far the most important question for eliciting more information during an interview.

- It is always better to conduct interviews in person rather than telephonically, but if organisations are located far away, it is preferable to phone rather than limit interviews to organizations nearby.
- Even though there will be a verbal introduction at the beginning of the interview, it is recommended that interviewers hand out a general introductory sheet about the project and REReP. But it is important to remember that this should be done AFTER the interview to avoid distracting interviewees.

DURING THE INTERVIEW, PLEASE PUT DOWN THE FOLLOWING:

Editor's note: More information on Central and Eastern European NGOs can be found in the REC's NGO directory. It can be ordered from the REC or viewed on-line at www.rec.org/REC/Databases/NGODirectory/

Organisation's name

Original name

Name in English

About the organisation

Number of active members

Location (capital, large city, small town/village)

Date of starting activities

Other

Organisation's address and contact information

Mailing address

Telephone number

Fax number

E-mail address

Web site address

Appendix 2: Interview questionnaire

For the interviewer: please note down the interviewed organisation's general data, following the template in the methodology document.

The purpose of this survey is to assess the network development capacity of NGOs in South Eastern Europe. Your input will help us to design a needs-oriented project aimed at strengthening networking, cooperation and partnership potential. The project will enable your organisation to participate actively in the establishment or strengthening of a computer-based NGO network.

1. Please estimate the organisations you keep in touch with at least once in a few months.

Environmental organisations from your own country

Environmental organisations from abroad

Governmental institutions/public authorities

Scientific, educational institutions

2. What kind of information of public interest do you think your NGO could provide for other organisations?

Information about your organisation

Case studies

Articles

News on regular basis

Databases

Other, please specify

3. What are the human resources needs of your NGO in joining or using a more suitable computer-based network?

Please rank your needs from the most urgent/important (1) to the least urgent/important (4).

- staff with the technical skills to use the network
- knowledge on how to publish information on-line
- how to communicate in mailing lists, how to manage all the information
- English language capacity to use the network
- staff in general

4. Please rank the following difficulties experienced by your organisation.

(rank 1=most to 4=least)

- paying phone bills
- buying suitable computer equipment (please specify)
- paying for extra staff
- paying for the services of a local Internet café or other computers out of the office

5. Please rank each of the areas of interest to your NGO in the next two years.

(rank: 1=most important to 4=least important)

- to look for project partners in international projects
- to get ideas and examples of successful projects
- to develop skills to use information technology (computers)
- to exchange environmental (or work-related) information
- to get access to environmental (or work-related) information
- to look for information about donors and funds
- to publish environmental information on the Web
- to popularise your NGO
- to publish environmental news on a regular basis
- other, please specify

6. What are your main technical problems?

- lack of suitable computer equipment in the office
- lack of computer facilities to use outside the office (for example in an Internet café, university, or other NGO)
- unstable or unreliable telephone lines
- no Internet service provider in your town
- other, please specify

7. Please describe how you use electronic networking (if you do)?

7.1 You have Internet access:

- at the NGO office
- only in Internet centres or cafés
- only through members' home or office accounts

7.2 You use e-mail:

- for communicating with all partners
- mainly for communicating with foreign partners
- less often than fax or ordinary mail

7.3 You have subscribed to:

- environmental mailing lists
- environmental electronic newsletters
- environmental newsgroups

7.4 Does your organisation use the Internet for:

- searching for work-related background information
- publishing on the Web
- on-line campaigning
- on-line fundraising (looking for information about donors and donor programmes)
- on-line cooperative work with other organisations
- other NGO activities on-line, please specify

8. Please evaluate the cooperation/partnership experience of your NGO by selecting the appropriate answers.

8.1 We have cooperated with other organisations in:

- fundraising
- project implementation
- campaigning
- lobbying
- other, please specify

Please specify whether they have been successful and why.

8.2 We haven't cooperated yet, because:

- we do not see the necessity of cooperating with other NGOs
- other NGOs are competitors rather than cooperation partners
- bad experience with cooperation
- cooperating on a smaller scale already without a network
- no other NGO does related work
- language barrier for international cooperation
- other, please specify

8.3 We plan to cooperate with:

[organisation]

[area]

[motivation]

9. **How much time per month do you think you could reserve to put information of public interest into the network?**

- up to 2 days
- up to 4 days
- up to one week
- other, please specify

10. What do you think could improve the international cooperation of environmental NGOs, primarily with neighbouring countries?

- possibility to exchange ideas, information and best practices
- work on joint (internationally funded) projects
- lobby internationally
- work on transboundary environmental problems
- raise funds for joint projects
- informal communication on-line (discussion/ mailing groups, private e-mails etc.)
- informal communication in person (seminars, work meetings, workshops etc.)
- other, please specify

11. In what ways would you expect this project to be of benefit to you? Why and how?

12. Would you like to give us your ideas about the project or some comments that you think we should consider?

Appendix 3: Acknowledgements

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Appendix 4: Internet links

South Eastern European Electronic NGO Networking (REReP) Project Home Page:
www.rec.org/REC/Programs/SEE_Networking/

BlueLink Information Network:
www.bluelink.net

StrawberryNet - Romanian NGO information network:
www.ngo.ro

Green Action (Zelena Akcija), Croatian NGO:
www.zelena-akcija.hr

The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC):
www.rec.org

The REC's Country Office network:
www.rec.org/REC/Introduction/CountryOffices/

Maps of Central and Eastern European countries and regions:
www.rec.org/REC/Maps/

General information on Central and Eastern European countries:
www.rec.org/REC/Countries.html

Association for Progressive Communications
(an international umbrella organisation of NGO networks):
www.apc.org

NGO Directory
(searchable database of all Central and Eastern European environmental NGOs):
www.rec.org/REC/Databases/NGODirectory/

The Use of Information and Communication Technologies by Non-Governmental Organizations in Southeast Europe
www.oneworld.net/radio/see/ict/

Needs Assessment of Environmental NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe:
www.rec.org/REC/Publications/NGONeeds/

Information gateway to NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe:
www.rec.org/REC/Stakeholders.html#NGOs

Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe:
www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REReP/

Appendix 5: Bibliography

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Institute for Sustainable Communities. *High Hopes, High Hurdles: A Needs Assessment of Macedonia's Environmental NGOs*. Skopje, 1995

Markova, Helena. *Environmental NGOs and their Long-term Financial Sustainability*. Prague 1996

NGO Directory: a Directory of Environmental Non-governmental Organizations in Central and Eastern Europe (Including an NGO Needs Assessment). The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe. Szentendre, Hungary. 2001

Southeast Europe Initiative, OneWorld International, Information Program of the Open Society Institute. *The Use of Information and Communication Technologies by Non-Governmental Organizations in Southeast Europe*. 2001

The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe. *Problems, Progress and Possibilities: A Needs Assessment of Environmental NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe*. The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe. Szentendre, Hungary. 1997

Information on how to obtain REC publications is available on-line at www.rec.org/REC/Publications/pubs_orderform.html.

Downloadable PDF documents are available at www.rec.org/REC/Publications.html

Appendix 6: Abbreviations

APC	Association for Progressive Communications, an international umbrella organisation of national NGO networks. More information: < www.apc.org >
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe. In this context, the 15 beneficiary countries of the REC. More information: < www.rec.org/REC/Countries.html > and < www.rec.org/REC/Maps/ >
CO	Country Office (of the REC). More information: < www.rec.org/REC/Introduction/CountryOffices/ >
FR	Federal Republic
NIS	Newly Independent States (countries of the former Soviet Union)
NGO	Non-governmental, non-profit organisations. More information on NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe: < www.rec.org/REC/Stakeholders.html#NGOs >
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. More information: < www.osce.org >
REC	The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe. An independent, non-advocacy, non-profit international institution with a mission to assist in solving environmental problems in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). More information: < www.rec.org >
REReP	Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South Eastern Europe. The main environmental component of the Balkan Stability Pact, Working Table II. More information: < www.rec.org/REC/Programs/REREP/ >
SEE	South Eastern Europe. Within the context of the REReP it refers to the following countries and entity: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Yugoslavia, Kosovo (currently under UN interim administration)
UN	United Nations. More information: < www.un.org >
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. More information: < www.unmik.org >

Appendix 7: Notes

1 Problems, Progress and Possibilities: A Needs Assessment of Environmental NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe. Please see the bibliography in Appendix 5.

2 Source: NGO Directory, a Directory of Environmental Non-governmental Organizations in Central and Eastern Europe. Please see the bibliography in Appendix 5.

3 AL = Albania, BiH = Bosnia and Herzegovina, BG = Bulgaria, HR = Croatia, MK = FYR Macedonia, RO = Romania, YU = Yugoslavia, KOS = Kosovo

4 NGO Directory, a Directory of Environmental Non-governmental Organizations in Central and Eastern Europe (Including an NGO Needs Assessment). Please see the bibliography in Appendix 5.

5 However, the real number is certainly greater, since increasing numbers of new NGOs appear, and some active environmental groups operate on an informal level and are not officially registered in accordance with Bulgarian law. Unfortunately, the old registration procedure is untransparent for technical reasons, and precise statistics are therefore inaccessible even to MoEW. Since all NGOs must re-register in 2001, it is hoped that the new system will facilitate citizens' access to data for informational and statistical purposes. Personal communication with Nelly Ilieva, Information Centre Coordinator at MoEW.

6 According to the public relations officer at the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Waters (MoEW), Katya Shavuleva. Media seminar on environmental journalism, co-organised by BlueLink, MoEW, and the Central Balkan National Park. Uzana, June 2001

7 All based outside the capital. Most of them are small but active NGOs with limited funding. One NGO finds it expensive to pay for its use of ISDN.

8 Are Cyber Detectives Coming? Issue number 26 of Capital.Net (a regular supplement of the Capital newspaper). <www.capital.bg/article.php3?broi=2001-26&page=n1-26-1&rubr=net>. 29 June 2001.

9 NGO Directory, a Directory of Environmental Non-governmental Organizations in Central and Eastern Europe (Including an NGO Needs Assessment). Please see the bibliography in Appendix 5.

10 "Ivo Pilar" Institute for Social Studies: Religion and Moral in Croatia.

11 World Wide Fund for Nature.

WHAT IS REReP?

The Regional Environmental Reconstruction Program (REReP) is the basis for environmental policy in South Eastern Europe and the main environmental component of the Stability Pact, Working Table II.

Initiated by the SEE countries themselves (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Romania and Yugoslavia), the programme's aims are concentrated in four priority areas: institution building, support to environmental civil society, support to environmental regional cooperation mechanisms and cross border projects, and reducing environmental health threats and loss of biodiversity.

