



6th Baltic Sea NGO Forum Summary

5-7 October 2006, Stockholm, Sweden

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Introduction

On 5-7 October 2006 180 representatives from voluntary organisations and representatives from international organizations and national governments convened in Stockholm for the 6th Baltic Sea NGO Forum. The overarching theme was Human Rights and Democratic participating. The need for sharing experiences, find common values and principles as well as expressing the willingness to cooperate with other NGOs and authorities on different levels was commonly articulated.

The Forum was, beside plenary meetings, structured around eleven different seminars in four thematic areas:

- Civil Security – Trafficking, Violence against Women/Children, Criminality and Drugs,
- Discrimination and Social Inclusion,
- Environment and Sustainability
- NGO-legislation, Legal Security and Civil Society

The respective Thematic Working Group finalized *Seminar Summaries* on their discussions and recommendations during the NGO Forum. These can be found at the Baltic Sea NGO Forum website www.bsngoforum.org. In addition, each Thematic Working Group finalized an *Action Plan* for forthcoming activities attached to this document.

Results

Our goal was to take a qualitative step forward in developing the Baltic Sea NGO Network, in which the NGO Forum conference is one part, and through the work of the Thematic Working Groups make our work more concrete. The 6th Baltic Sea NGO Forum succeeded in taking this step forward by launching six Thematic Working Groups:

- Working Group against *Drugs and Criminality*
- Working Group against *Trafficking*
- Working Group on *Environment and Sustainability*
- Working Group on *Discrimination and Social Inclusion*
- Working Group on *NGO Legal Environment*
- Working Group on *Belarus*

In addition, a *Common Framework* for the Baltic Sea NGO Network developed by the Coordinating Committee was presented to the NGO Forum participants:

- Principles of the Baltic Sea NGO Network
- Organization Plan for Baltic Sea NGO Network

Apart from the above the Nordic Council of Ministers launched their new funding programme for NGOs in the Baltic Sea Region which was very well received, enabling the participants to link new initiatives to a concrete funding opportunity.

Proposals

As a way to establish a culture of cooperation where the Baltic Sea NGO Network work together with the Council of the Baltic Sea States and other regional institutions, we have summarized below a few of the main points that we wish to bring forward - as a basis for further cooperation.

Thematic Working Groups

- There are six Thematic Working Groups established after the NGO Forum 2006. Our common aim is to make these groups operational between the annual NGO Forums with an ability to keep direct contacts with working groups within the Council of the Baltic Sea States and other official structures in the region. We foresee that they can help to build an “infrastructure” so that civil society organizations have a place to debate and cooperate and governments structures have an entry point in getting in contact with relevant NGO:s on certain topics.
- Priority should be given in this initial phase – to support the Thematic Working Groups to get started and consolidate their activities. We invite interested government or CBSS representatives on different levels to make contact with the respective groups by getting in touch with the designated contact person as stated in the Action Plans. It must be stressed that this is a process and the respective groups have to have some time to structure and plan joint initiatives. However, some kind of contact from CBSS would be very welcome at an early stage.
- Later on in the process we can see possibilities for more regular contacts. We propose to invite NGO representatives from the Thematic Working Groups that CBSS see can add a citizen’s perspective, or in some cases expertise, to a certain issues. Prior to this year’s NGO Forum some Thematic Working Groups expressed a clear interest in establishing closer contacts with the CBSS Working Group on Democratic Institutions (see below under “Enhancing Civil Society perspectives”). The Baltic Sea NGO Forum wishes to take the opportunity to underline the importance of such a development, as well as deeper contacts with other working groups within CBSS.
- Should there be a need to, we suggest that establishing clear rules including rights and commitments to consultation with civil society as well as establishing clear criteria for NGO participation in consultation and advisory groups, focusing on diversity, would be decided jointly between the Working Group and their respective government or CBSS counterpart.

Enhancing Civil Society perspectives

Civil Society is too often regarded, by governments and civil servants, as somewhat mysterious and sometimes even threatening. It is true that the NGO community in the Baltic Sea Region is highly diversified in its outlook. NGOs are active in many different fields and they also differ widely in their size, resources, orientation and goals-which is natural since they have emerged in a historical process and can be regarded as an expression of the values, customs and needs that exists in society at large. Nevertheless, their differences should not blur the fact that they have a role to play in their respective societies. Citizens engaged in civil society are in fact the very same people that form the constituency that give legitimacy to governments. The Baltic Sea NGO Forum wish to suggests that:

- Many NGOs have experienced that there is a need for a better comprehension of the role of civil society in public administration and among civil servants. We would like to suggest that civil servant exchanges, for example the Nordic Council of Ministers programme “New Knowledge Transfer and Networking Programme”, and similar activities within CBSS structures would benefit from having a training session on NGOs and their role in society with a view to enhance the knowledge and perspectives on this issue in the Baltic Sea region. The Baltic Sea NGO Network is able to participate/contribute to such discussions.
- Given that the main objective of the WGDI is promoting democratic development in the Baltic Sea region, we acknowledge that the WGDI has a central role in enhancing a deeper understanding of civil society within public administration structures in the region. We wish to suggest that WGDI and relevant thematic working groups and the Coordinating Committee initiate a discussion during the first quarter of the 2007, for example on possibilities to add a civil society training session for civil servants to the Nordic Council of Ministers programme.

Additional examples of possibilities for cooperation are expressed in respective Action Plan. For example the WG on NGO legal environment suggest the involvement of WGDI in their plans to set up national monitoring groups on NGO legal environment in the region.

- The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) is yet another possible partner in this context. The Baltic Sea NGO Forum wishes to express our interest in concrete contacts with BSPC regarding civil society development and how parliamentarians might take part in awareness raising activities regarding civil society development with their colleagues in the region. The Baltic Sea NGO Network is able to participate/contribute to such discussions.

Baltic Sea NGO Contact Center

- A number of applications have been submitted to the Nordic Council of Ministers as a result of their presentation at the NGO Forum of a new funding programme for NGOs in the Baltic Sea Region. The Baltic Sea Coordinating Committee have - through the Russian Focal Point - submitted an application entitled “Baltic Sea NGO Contact Center”. The project aims to give practical support to the NGO Network and help strengthening the Thematic Working Groups.

The 6th Baltic Sea NGO Forum 2006 was arranged by Forum Syd, in collaboration with the Coordinating Committee of the Baltic Sea NGO Network. Forum Syd has about 200 member organisations in Sweden and cooperates with organisations and networks worldwide. Our common aim is global justice.

Read more about the Baltic Sea NGO Forum on www.bsngoforum.org
 Read more about Forum Syd on www.forumsyd.org.

Civil Security

Two Working Groups will be created:

- 1) Working Group against Drugs and Criminality
- 2) Working Group against Trafficking

Problem Analysis - Drugs and Criminality

The major problem is the huge amount of drugs and criminality in the Baltic Sea region. The criminal/legal system failed or at least is not enough anymore. People still go to prison - crimes are still committed. There is a real lack of support.

Solutions exist but there is a lack of means (staff and resources especially). Moreover another problem is the planned decreasing of funding for the newcomers in the European Union and for Russia. It is said that those countries have reached a democratic level and therefore the support by funding is not needed anymore. We on the opposite feel that the help is extremely needed in order for those countries to learn how to build NGOs, how to look for funding.

This is also an economical issue: in most of the cases, the people who ended up using drugs or being criminals often have difficult conditions of living, or a difficult family background. They are not provided with the necessary stability and security. We all have to make the welfare society stronger in order to prevent those problems. Today was shown that NGOs and people can do a lot themselves (by helping each other). Each time there is an economical interest, the problem cannot be stopped unless combined efforts of the different actors of the society.

The situation is so different from country to country. It is hard to find common points and it does not facilitate the cooperation. Cooperation depends much on the people and their willingness, but often it is hard to compromise.

How will we as NGOs cooperate to help solving these problems?

It is crucial to increase the efforts of international cooperation and to increase the dialogue. NGOs should show their expertise and influence the law-making process. It is important for the NGOs to cooperate and to share their networks and communicate on practises and experiences. The organisations can make a practical change (role model, services...). NGOs being experts can be the voice, which proclaims alternatives, efficient policies.

What can authorities on local-national and regional levels do?

The authorities should admit and not be a shame of their lack of experience. They should ask NGOs for their expertise and take criticism from NGOs. The authorities can give both a material and moral support to NGOs (funding, diplomas...) as the recognition of their existence and contribution. NGOs must be created without barriers and be under regulations, which do not prevent them from working

What can NGOs and authorities do together?

One suggestion could be to implement the participation of NGOs representatives in advisory boards on local/municipal levels to start with. It is important to combine and develop the resources and expertises through dialogue.

Action Plan: Working Group against Drugs and Criminality

The working group aims to stimulate that more organizations working against drugs and criminality join the Baltic Sea NGO Network. There is a need to keep in touch and have communication on the topic in between the annual NGO-Forums. It is essential to increase the networks and to enlarge the number of organisations within the thematic working group.

Establish an e-mail list for NGOs working against drugs and criminality:

The e-mail address is against_drugs_and_criminality@googlegroups.com

Maria Fedunova greaty2001@mail.ru from ECAD-St Petersburg is the administrator of the e-mail list. If you want to join or invite other people to join the list, send the e-mail address Maria Fedunova. Texts in the list can be in both English and Russian.

With the email contact list we can:

- Use each other's networks
- Exchange experiences from concrete projects, lessons learnt.
- Promote the Working Group against Drugs and Criminality and the Baltic Sea NGO Network and attract new people.
- Find partners and use better practices in the form of practical actions, seminars, conferences, meetings, etc.

Hopefully, more people working in this field will be present at the NGO-Forum in Latvia. At this point it should be possible to discuss projects and funding for a Thematic Working Group, for example the partnership program from the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Cultural Diversity in the context of drugs and criminality should be discussed at the Baltic Sea NGO Forum 2007.

Participants of the Action Plan discussion October 7, 2006

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Sunami Artem, ECAD St Petersburg, Artsunami@mail.ru

Inna Pik, ECAD-St Petersburg, Inn-pik@yandex.ru

Lina Vaitkiene, Charity and Support fund KRIS in North West Lithuania, linavaitkiene@hotmail.com

Anna Markina, Tartu University Estonia, Anna.markina@ut.ee

Christer Karlsson, Criminals Return to Society, Sweden, info@kris.a.se

Alexandr Zatravkin, Criminals Return to Society, Russia, zatravkina@mail.ru

Sophie Andersson-Levasseur, Criminals Return to Society, Sweden, sophie.levasseur@kris.a.se

Peter Söderlund, Criminals Return to Society, Sweden, nationell.samordnare@kris.a.se

Gardar Skaptason, Norden Association Iceland, sum@simnet.is

Problem Analysis - Trafficking

The most important issue to work with is the demand, to make the society aware of the problem. Who is the buyer? There exists a lot of research and know how, but it must be put together, analysed and focused.

The knowledge of how to treat prostitutes and to make exit-programmes must be better. Also the links between pornography and prostitution need to be studied

International conventions are useful, but it is difficult for authorities to implement them. Very often authorities – and others – do not know that conventions exist. Lobbying is important, so are shadow-reports from NGOs that legitimise our existence as NGOs.

Action Plan: Working Group against Trafficking

How to organize the Thematic Working Group against Trafficking:

1. Contact Person: Mildred Hedberg, National Organization for Women's Shelters and Young Women's Shelters in Sweden, mildred.hedberg@roks.se
2. The SIDA Baltic Sea Unit will set up a new website www.balticgrowing.se, which is an information bank partly focusing on our theme Trafficking. At the webpage we can both publish and gather information. The participants decided to give their e-mail addresses to SIDA's contact person Anna Lidgren anna.lidgren@sida.se.
3. Collect statistics
4. Use the EWL website (www.womenlobby.org) to get information about the ongoing project
5. Get more information about where to get more information material (films, poster etc)

During 2007 we will start the work for organizing a conference, with focus on the demand – who is the buyer? The conference will be held in one of the countries in the Baltic Sea region. Contact-persons for the conference will be Marianne Eriksson and Mildred Hedberg.

For more information on the theme Civil Security please see: Forum Summary ANNEX II, to be found at www.bsngoforum.org

Discrimination and Social Inclusion

Problem Analysis

In the countries around the Baltic Sea, people are discriminated against on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religious belief, gender, sexual orientation, age, and class. These are often seen as separate spheres of experience that determine social, economic and political dynamics of oppression. But in fact, the systems often overlap and cross over each other, creating complex intersections at which two or three or more of these axes may meet.

People who are discriminated against are unable to lead life to the fullest and are denied their right to social inclusion. It is a basic human right to not be discriminated against.

In addition, organizations who work for human rights and against discrimination must be role models. This is not always the case. They sometimes reproduce the same discrimination they are working against in their own organizations. Therefore, we need to create the change we want to see.

How can NGOs cooperate to help solve problems and make use of good practice?

It is easier to solve problems if you know what your goals are and what you want to do. In order for NGOs to find ways of cooperating, you first of all have to develop an understanding for our different circumstances as NGOs from different countries. For example, in Sweden, you sometimes get paid for your NGO work, something that is not always the case elsewhere. It was stressed that resources might not be a requirement for good cooperation. Organisations with very little money have shown that they are working together much more efficiently than those with better resources. We have a lot of issues in common but we need to improve our knowledge and understanding of each other's work.

Proposal

- Share experiences
- Find common values and principles
- Tell others (such as authorities) that you are ready and willing to cooperate

Cooperating successfully in the future requires ways of communicating and sharing information about our work and experiences. We could get together to share good examples of successful methods of anti-discrimination work for example. International networking is important, as well as remembering that not everyone will be able to access information equally since not everyone speaks English, has access to the Internet or is able to see, for example. Therefore we need multiple ways of sharing information. We must be aware of who we exclude when we decide on specific forms of communicating with one another, and make those choices visible. Ways of sharing information could be a joint website, a newsletter or a mailing list, for example.

NGOs can always use networking, for example as a way to identify the recommendations for an alternative report to influence the local, regional, and national authorities.

What can authorities on the local, national and regional level do?

Background: There is a need for cooperation with NGOs.

Proposal: Authorities can ask NGOs for their "expert" opinion/information. They can obtain better knowledge about the situation for different groups by using an alternative report as a source of information.

What can NGOs and authorities do together?

Background: There are very different situations in the different countries. Some organisations take bigger risks with their work since they express opinions not accepted by their government.

Proposal: NGOs can be an expert partner for authorities. However, it can sometimes be problematic cooperating with authorities since the terms rarely will be defined by the NGOs. Many participants fear the consequences of strategic cooperation with official authorities. Therefore, resources should be allocated in order to strengthen the NGOs in their capacity to challenge the government rather than forcing them to act according to governments' requirements.

Participants' roles/interest in creating a Thematic Working Group to continue to work with this theme/issue:

Background: What can we do within the Baltic Sea NGO Network, why, and how?

Proposal

- Provide independent, authoritative input
- Involve immigrant organizations
- Make good experiences/results part of the structure of how we work (as well as sharing our mistakes so that others don't make the same mistakes). We don't need to reinvent the wheel.
- Identify the common problems that we have; then we can identify our goals.
- Sustainability – how do we continue to work so that problems finally are solved?
- We need to keep this forum alive!

Action Plan: Working Group on Discrimination and Social Inclusion

Contact Person: Anette Sjödin, anette.sjodin@rfsl.se

Agreed activities/Products

E-mail lists: 1. Open list, 2. list for Link Organisations, 3. National lists

Responsible: no 1 and 2 RFSL, no 3 National Link Org

- Activities/projects focusing on specific areas
- Activities/projects including different discrimination grounds and with an intersectional perspective
- Info Bank – web site, A project could be developed

Application to the Nordic Council of Ministers

Responsible: RFSL will investigate and present ideas for next year.

Key Words: 6 round tables/Web site/The Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007 [funding from EU and Nordic Council of Ministers]/How to influence Institutions of importance for the region? /Funding of coordination

Contact CBSS Working Group on Democratic Institutions

Responsible: Anneli Joneken, SHIA, will investigate.

Organization of the Thematic Working Group

Lead Agency: Responsible for coordinating the Thematic Working Group

RFSL (The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights)

National Link Organisations: Responsible for national communication between NGOs.

Finland: Finnish League for Human Rights, Outi Lepola, outi.lepola@ihmisoikeusliitto.fi

Lithuania: LGL, Eduardas Platovas, edis@gay.lt

Poland: Network of East West Women, Zofia Lapniewska, zofia@neww.org.pl

Latvia: Latvian Pensioners' Federation, Karlis Bormanis, bormanis@cfi.lu.lv

Ukraine: Charity Foundation Rokada, Olena Burkatska, office@rokada.org.ua

Sweden: RFSL, Anette Sjödin, anette.sjodin@rfsl.se

Estonia: RIFFI, Antonia Estam, s.riffi@telia.com

Russia: Norden Association

Denmark, Iceland, Germany, Belarus: ?

Discussion in small groups: Which are the most important issues in the theme?

- Vision: Baltic Sea Region without discrimination and with cooperating NGOs.
- Learn from practical projects – collect experiences “Info Bank” (open to all NGOs in the area) Template for project information.
- Make it easier to find organizations working in the same field (recommendation to next Forum, also between Forums?)
- Important areas: Equality, Women’s human rights, Lobbying legal acts, Young people with disabilities, Elderly – age discrimination – poverty of elderly, Economical discrimination, Language and reading discrimination, Ex-prisoners, Invite immigrants’ organisations to the next Forum
- Important for the TWG to survive: Keep the work on a general level, having all discrimination grounds working together (including sexual orientation)
- The concept of intersectionality is important.

For more information on the theme Discrimination and Social Inclusion please see: Forum Summary ANNEX III, to be found at www.bsngoforum.org

Environment and Sustainability

Background

The aim of the Environment seminar of the 6th Baltic Sea NGO Forum was to introduce the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) as the regional implementation plan for the EU Marine Strategy.

It was discussed, how the grass-root environmental NGOs can contribute to the drafting process (until November 2007) and how they can cooperate with the governments for realising and supervision the set objectives. The workshop participants formulated concrete ideas on how their organisation could contribute to the BSAP process, who would they like to see as cooperation partners and what kind of certain responsibilities they might take during the period before the next forum. This action plan gathers the most important issues addressed.

Action Plan: Working Group on Environment and Sustainability

Contact Person: Maret Merisaar, Coalition Clean Baltic, Estonian Secretariat, maret.merisaar@ccb.se (The group decided that Maret Merisaar will continue to be the contact person for the group until responsibility for projects can be specified).

1. Eutrophication of the Baltic

Interested individuals and organizations:

Ruzena Svedelius, Green Library in Lund, Sweden, rsvedelius@hotmail.com

Latvian Agricultural NGO Ventspils District Agricultural Union

Maria Staniciewska

The contribution of nutrients from agriculture and urban areas to the Baltic Sea is an acute problem that must be addressed on several fronts.

The exchange of positive experience among NGOs effective steering mechanisms: water purification schemes, sustainable agricultural practices may be an appropriate first step.

The group particularly recognized the need to maintain regional nutrient balance in agriculture. This is easily achieved when farms have both animal and crop production. Market pressures, however, favour specialization and larger scale of operations, which historically have not maintained a sustainable balance.

The NGOs will urge their governments to find appropriate measures to support sustainable small-scale farming and to maintain a viable infrastructure (dairies, slaughterhouses) for that purpose.

2. Climate change

a) Energy and Transportation

WWF Russia, Alexey Korokin, akokorin@wwf.ru

Estonian Society for Nature Conservation (Estonia), Helmut Hallemaa,

helmut.hallemaa@mail.ee

The Group recognized the key importance of the transport sector and energy efficiency for reducing GHG-emissions. The group resolved to share good examples: fuel cells, biofuels; renewable energy sources, energy efficiency in heating, etc. NGOs should encourage consumers to buy “green electricity” (electricity generated from renewables). Where the opportunity does not yet exist, NGOs should collaborate to make it possible. The Group will also reach out to activate consumer organizations in our countries.

b.) Cycling

Piotr Kuropatwinski, Gdansk University, piotr.kuropatwinski@gnu.univ.gda.pl

Cycling is a positive example of sustainable transport, especially appropriate in urban areas. Besides recreation, cycling also has cultural benefits; international bike paths are a way to promote international understanding.

The Group resolved to actively support cycling initiatives, locally and in the region as a whole. The Group will liaise with national cycling organizations to engage them in international projects. A goal in the longer term might be to create a continuous biking path around the Baltic Sea.

4. Radioactive pollution of the Baltic

Contact Person: MILKAS (Sweden), Per Hegelund, valiantdk@yahoo.com

Resolution:

'The levels of antropogenic radionuclides are higher in the Baltic Sea than in any other water bodies around the world.'

(Quote from 'Hazardous Substances in the Baltic Sea – Draft HELCOM Thematic Assessment in 2006' to be found at www.bsngoforum.org)

On the 6.th of October 2006, participants in the workshop on the Radioactive Contamination of the Baltic Sea, conclude:

Knowing the serious condition of the Baltic Sea, as exemplified by the statement above from Helsinki Commission experts 2006,

- we demand, as a minimum, a moratorium – a stop for any additional nuclear facilities to be located at the waters of the Baltic Sea!
- we urge the governments of the Baltic Sea States not to plan new nuclear projects in the region, unless they are necessary to ensure decommissioning of existing nuclear power plants.
- we hope that environmental NGO's of the Baltic Countries will take proactive position to ensure minimization of radioactivity in the Baltic Sea region.

The resolution found support at the Environment Action Plan meeting on Saturday 7th of October.

Discussion:

- The nuclear sector is notoriously non-transparent. It is clear, however, that both the industry and radiation protection agencies consider the Baltic Sea an "appropriate recipient" for radioactive effluents, to quote the Swedish authority.
- Consciousness-raising among civil society organizations is therefore a first priority, with a view to opening decision-making about nuclear planning to a meaningful public dialogue.
- The Group are agreed as to the need for a moratorium on new nuclear establishments around the Baltic.
- The Group are very concerned about Russian plans to import spent nuclear fuels on a large scale to harbours in the eastern end of the Gulf of Finland, i.e., ships carrying highly hazardous cargo will cross the entire southern Baltic on a regular basis. At the

minimum the region should have assurances that transports will take place only using vessels of the highest safety class, i.e., ships equipped with the best available containment technology. We NGOs outside Russia will ask our governments to approach the Russian government on the matter.

- The Group will seek to initiate ecological studies of the effects of routine emissions of heat and radioactive fluids and gases from coastal nuclear power plants in all countries.
- To facilitate the transition from oil- and nuclear-based power.

Interested Organizations:

MILKAS (Sweden), Per Hegelund, valiantdk@yahoo.com

Bellona (St.Petersburg, Russia), Rashid Alimov, rashid@bellona.ru

Women against Nuclear Energy (Finland) Gerd Söderholm, gerdsoderholm@yahoo.com

Swedish Anti-Nuclear Movement (Sweden), Charly Hultén, inootherwords@telia.com

Environmental Group FRI (Belarus), Maryna Karavai, m.karavai@gmail.com

Community Atgaja (Lithuania), Saulius Piksrys, saulius@atgaja.lt

5. Sustainable fishing

No responsibility assigned

The NGOs in the group and authorities are urged to monitor the development of fish populations, to take measures to prevent overfishing and to prosecute illegal landings. The conditions for natural regeneration of fish populations must also be improved. Eutrophication, oil spills and both hot water and radioactive effluents from nuclear installations are three threats to fish fry that the participating groups will try to put on the public agenda.

6. Sustainable shipping

No responsibility assigned

The Group recognized the work of NGOs in Denmark, Germany and Sweden, but no representatives of these organizations were present at the action-plan session. More international cooperation to bring oil spills under control is necessary. The group recognized the value of introducing incentives (negative as well as positive) for the shipping industry itself to shoulder some responsibility for policing.

7. Gas Pipeline

There was an interest to work in the area of demanding proper Environmental Impact Assessment for the German Russian Gas Pipeline expressed. A working group could be established for organizing a public control over the construction activities, and Mr Alexander Shkrebets expressed his readiness to be responsible for that activity.

Interested Organizations: Mr. Alexander Shkrebets, Transboundary Environmental Information Agency, Russia, sasha@teia.org

Ms. Anne Wittich, Naturschutzbund, Germany, aniaa2002@yahoo.com

For more information on the theme Environment and Sustainability please see: Forum Summary ANNEX IV, to be found at www.bsngoforum.org

NGO-legislation, Legal Security and Civil Society

Two Working Groups shall be created:

1. Working Group on NGO legal environment
2. Working Group on Belarus

Problem Analysis

1. Recent development: legislative restrictions on NGOs especially in Russia and Belarus, but also in EU countries. Both EU and OECD make attempts to tighten control over NGOs under the pretext of fighting terrorism.
2. NGOs dependence on foreign funding

Action Plan: Working Group on NGO Legal Environment

Contact Person: Mikhail Gorny, Center Strategy, St Petersburg, mg@strateg.spb.su

The working group aims to monitor the NGO legal environment in CBSS-countries, with a special focus on Russia. The group plans to:

1. Create national monitoring groups on NGO-legislation composed of NGOs

- Create one monitoring group in each CBSS-country to monitor the NGO-legislation and the implementation of the Council of Europe Guidelines.
- Agree on a common methodology of monitoring.
- Prepare bi-annual or annual reports, which at minimum shall be published at the website of the NGO-Forum (www.bsngoforum.org).
- Create awareness on legislative restrictions on NGOs' activities in Russia, Belarus and EU countries (EU prepares certain changes on NGO legislation), by for example organizing a conference in Denmark (to be developed).

2. Highlight the importance and simplification of legislation on local sources of funding (own business activity, community funds, fundraising from private sector), in order for NGOs to become less dependent on foreign donors.

- Analyze the existing legislation on local funding: law on charity, regional & local grants, traditions, law on endowments, community funds, etc.

3. Engage institutions and citizen's groups in the national monitoring groups on NGO legislation. Which groups should be engaged?

- CBSS Working Group on Democratic Institutions (WGDI)
- Council of Europe - use their Guidelines.
- National governments
- EU, OECD and UN
- National Focal Points in those countries where they are active and working.
- Participants of the NGO Legislation workshop at the 6th Baltic Sea NGO Forum
- Other NGOs from all CBSS countries
- Human Rights Institutions
- Media, to make them publicize the findings.

Other suggestions: How can we raise civil society dialogue in the region?

- Create a list/network of professional lawyers who have experience in national norms and international legal practice concerning NGOs that are willing to work *pro bono*. The group would work on request. Result of work – collection of legal cases and filing applications to the European Court.
- Check what other NGOs are doing in the region in the sphere. Some NGOs might like to have external expertise on the situation in their country.
- Study the precedents of the European Court on Human Rights (cases and precedents which build into legal practice).

Cooperation with CBSS

- Work in close cooperation with the CBSS – for example create a mechanism for regular interaction (for example consultation) with CBSS Working Group on Democratic Institutions
- Continue and improve annual consultation between CBSS and NGOs in the Baltic Sea area (existing consultations are rare, not enough, NGOs should be able to add up their issues of concern on the agenda)
- The Coordinating Committee of the NGO-Forum could delegate a representative to meetings of the CBSS WGs and make suggestions to their agenda, etc.

National Governments

- We encourage national governments to cooperate with the Council of Europe regarding policies on NGOs, including funding.

The Nordic Council of Ministers

- NGOs around the Baltic Sea could work in cooperation with the NCM to advance the existing program and complement it with new initiatives of for example exchange program between Nordic and Russian, Eastern and Western parliamentarians (including Germany).

Communication tools for the Working Group on NGO-legal environment

E-mails, website, and face-to-face meetings at least 2 times a year for all interested parties

Fundraising suggestions

Nordic Council of Ministers (Danish partner+ Russian partner + Baltic partner), Danish HELCOM and Danish Human Rights Institute.

Action Plan: Working Group on Belarus

Contact Person: Tatiana Poshevalova (Centre for Social Innovations) 840544@mail.ru

The main objectives:

- Quality change of the situation in Belarus
- Raising Belarusian issue in the European agenda

Organization of cooperation:

- Working Group communication is organized through a mailing list and meetings in workshops if possible.
- Any proposal submitted to the group via e-mail should be considered by members in 2 weeks after it is disseminated in the mailing group.
- All decisions are made by consensus of those members who took part in the discussions within these 2 weeks.
- People (representing Baltic Sea region organizations) who would like to join the group should apply to the group coordinator Tatiana Poshevalova (840544@mail.ru), and their application will be considered as any other decision-making procedure.

Members of the group (as of October 7, 2006)

Belarus

Tatiana Poshevalova (Centre for Social Innovations) 840544@mail.ru - the group coordinator

Andrei Yahorau (Agency for Humanitarian Technologies) karuzlik@gmail.com

Leonid Kalitenia (Centre for Social Innovations) csi-1@mail.ru

Eduard Vaitsiakhovich (Public Association "Women for Restoration of Narach region")
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For more information on the theme NGO-legislation, Legal Security and Civil Society please see: Forum Summary ANNEX V, to be found at www.bsngoforum.org

Organization plan for the Baltic Sea NGO Network

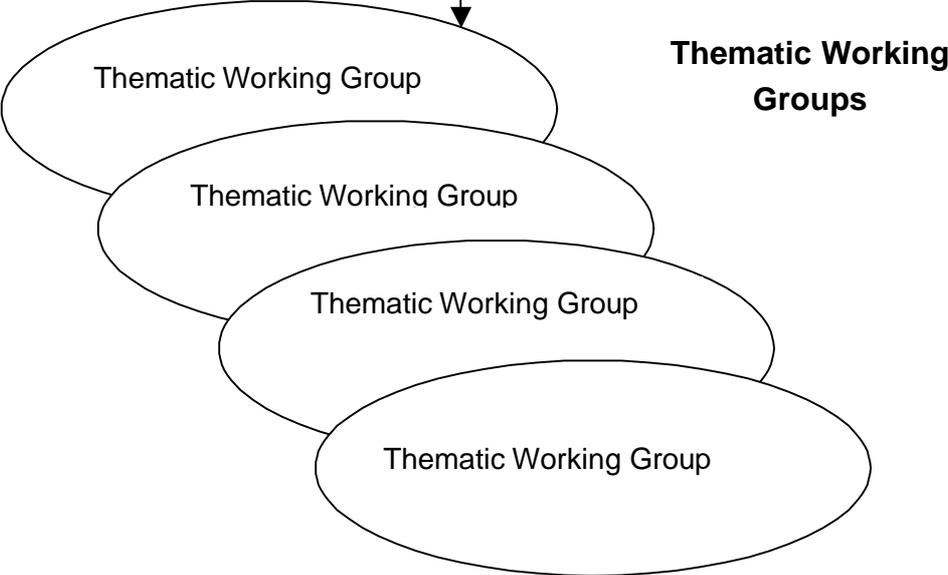
The Baltic Sea NGO Forum

- Hosted by the country holding the CBSS Presidency
- Organised by NGOs in the host country in collaboration with NGOs active in the Baltic Sea NGO Network
- Held annually



The Baltic Sea NGO Coordinating Committee

- One representative from each country (**11 Focal Points:** Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Finland, Poland, Norway, Iceland)
- Act as a steering group
- Chaired by representative from the country holding the CBSS Presidency
- Regular contacts via e-mail and aim to meet twice a year



Principles of the Baltic Sea NGO Network

Preamble

- The Baltic Sea NGO Network is a network for NGOs from 11 countries - members of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)
- The Network is committed to the promotion of civil society and NGO cooperation in the region,
- The Network as such, and the annual NGO Forum, offers an opportunity for dialogue between NGOs and governments, public authorities on future perspectives of co-operation in order to become a strong and relevant partner to the CBSS, other Baltic Sea institutions, as well as an important actor in the implementing process of EU programs,
- All work done within the Baltic Sea NGO Network is done on a voluntary basis by each Focal Point and their partner organizations.

The Baltic Sea NGO Network operates through:

- a) The annual Baltic Sea NGO Forum
- b) Work of the Baltic Sea NGO Coordinating Committee
- c) Work of Baltic Sea NGO Thematic Working Groups
- d) Work of the National Focal Points

The Baltic Sea NGO Coordinating Committee (CC):

The Coordinating Committee function as a *steering group* and consists of one representative from each National Focal Point;

- a) Each National Focal Point has one vote in the CC,
- b) The CC is aiming at reaching its decisions by consensus, either by all Focal Points being present or per capsulam,
- c) Decisions concerning financial matters, in which one or more parties take a financial risk, are taken by those who are involved, after informing the CC,
- d) The CC is making its decisions after consulting the National Platforms or other relevant national NGO networks,
- e) The CC has the right to set up an executive body or a Secretariat.

The Baltic Sea NGO Thematic Working Groups (WG):

- a) The Working Groups are an integral part of the Baltic Sea NGO Network, they are open and transparent structures operating in cooperation with the Coordinating Committee,
- b) Each Working Group decide its own modus operandi and choose a Head of the Working Group among its members,
- c) The Head of the Working Group is organising the work of the WG in close cooperation with its members,
- d) The Working Group keep the CC informed about its activities,
- e) The Working Groups can cooperate with existing networks and initiate new ones.

Focal Points:

National Coordinators, called Focal Points, interacts closely with NGOs on national level, which are interested in cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. Each Focal Point decides how to build up and organize the interaction with NGO in each country. It can vary according to resources available and the national context.

Amendments:

Amendments to these principles can be made by initiative from the Coordinating Committee.

Document adopted by the Coordinating Committee, September 2006.

ANNEX

For more information see the five Annexes in separate documents, which consist of notes from the 6th Baltic Sea NGO Forum's first day and Seminar Summaries from the workshops/seminars of October 6. These can be found at the Baltic Sea NGO Forum website www.bsngoforum.org.

Annex I: Opening, Plenary Session and Panel Discussion, October 5 2006

Annex II: Summary Theme Civil Security, October 6 2006

Annex III: Summary Theme Discrimination and Social Inclusion, October 6 2006

Annex IV: Summary Theme Environment and Sustainability, October 6 2006

Annex V: Summary Theme NGO-legislation, Legal Security and Civil Society, October 6 2006