

## REVISED

### PROCEDURE

for coordination of support to national and cross-border campaigns of partner NGOs and other associates and coalitions in the Black Sea Region

This procedure aims to summarize some of the experience of NGOs in the Black Sea region in influencing the public sector and policy making on national and regional level.

The history and development of societies in the six coastal countries suggest that the nature of this task should be particularly challenging. The project partners' background and experience is associated with environmental problems of the Black Sea, whose solution require a regional approach and joint coordinated efforts, a good basis for cooperation in the non-governmental sphere. However often the activities of the organizations lack a regional purpose and perspective.

The experience of the Black Sea NGO Network to support national and regional campaigns although modest can be developed further. The BSNN has supported a number of national campaigns in Bulgaria, Ukraine and Russia. To those we can add the activities in 2003–2004 to support Ukrainian and Romanian members and the Danube Environmental Forum (DEF) network in the campaign against the construction of a deep water navigation channel Danube – Black Sea at the Bystroe River, through the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve. In 2008–2009 a joint regional meeting of NGOs from the six coastal countries, within the project 'Environmental Cooperation for the Black Sea' prepared and presented an address to the Ministerial Meeting for the Revision of the Bucharest Convention in Sofia in April 2009.

Campaigns in the region and efforts to influence decision makers continue. Many of them unfortunately lack a regional purpose or fail to gain support from partners across borders.

*The procedure suggests ways in which the Black Sea NGO Network and partners can be involved in a campaign, an appeal to decision making bodies, a statement on behalf of organized civil society and other forms of activity. The procedure describes a mechanism for informing the prospective participants and if possible securing their informed support, on a consensus basis.*

The communication and support *procedure* can be regarded as a process of joint decision making on providing support to a partner NGO, a citizen group or a coalition on a significant public issue. *Participants* in the process can be NGOs from the Black Sea coastal countries, other national or international NGOs, associates, citizen groups, coalitions, experts, and other concerned stakeholders. Support to decision making can be provided by a flexible open structure including campaign coordinator, expert support bodies, consultants, the decision making structures of participants, individual supporters and other stakeholders.

*What do we want to do together?* – Conduct a coordinated activity, most often a campaign, aiming to solve a problem and bring about a positive change in a given public policy. As a rule the problem and its policy implications shall be very significant even to people across borders. Usually really big issues are obvious and easy to understand. The difficulty lies in influencing the relevant public bodies and institutions and other powerful factors concerned. The issue of the campaign may not necessarily be environmental though environmental problems of the Black Sea are very often regional and need to be addressed with policies and measures on regional level.

*Who shall start the consultation procedure?* – One or more NGOs (or interest groups) which conduct the campaign on national level. We may call them campaign *coordinators*. They shall target and describe the significant public issue with its cross-border and regional implications.

They shall present the issue in such a way as to be understandable in its wider regional implications to cross-border partners.

The coordinators shall start the campaign on national level and identify its long term aim, medium objectives and short term tasks. They shall also take the initiative to address and involve in communication the regional NGO community, experts, and the regional public. Usually campaigns start on national level; later their coordinators involve partners across the border and international organizations for support. Coordinators may start campaigns both on national and cross border level if they can involve the international partners outright.

*What shall the coordinators of the campaign communicate to the partners?* – The coordinators shall try to formulate the aims of the campaign. They should indicate the long term aim and the medium term objectives. The objectives shall help everyone understand what is regarded as victory of the campaign. It is also necessary to explain how the campaign will change the life of the people; or give them a feeling of influence over practices in society and authorities; or help them change the mechanisms of power. What short term of partial victories do the coordinators envisage as intermediary steps on the road to achieving your long-term goal? The campaign coordinators shall also provide information about organizational factors and problems, supporters and adversaries of the campaign, targets of the campaign (institutions, political figures). Tactics may also be discussed. The campaign coordinators shall strive to provide a realistic picture of the campaign and its aims, and identify clearly its supporters and opponents on national level and across the border, if this is the case. Public campaigns unfortunately are often manipulated by businesses and other interests.

*Whom shall the campaign coordinators address?*

Within the current project the BSNN makes an attempt to create a formal procedure to be used by campaign coordinators for seeking and increasing support for the campaign, with or without BSNN participation.

The *decision-making* can be made easier by an informal structure including campaign coordinator and expert support bodies. If the BSNN is organizing the campaign, it can use the suggested structure for informing and involving the participants.

*Participants in the process:*

1. Campaign coordinator on national level – the expert team of one or more NGOs or citizen groups coordinating the campaign on national level and taking the initiative for it. The coordinator is responsible for the overall design and implementation of the campaign and for providing information about its aim, objectives, strategy, resources, participants and supporters on national level, prospects for success etc.
2. Non-governmental organizations with their management structures (the BSNN may be one of them). They can provide support to the communication and consultation process and adopt a decision to support the campaign.

The Management Board of the BSNN can for example adopt a decision for support on behalf of the BSNN if there is enough information and consensus on the issue. Experience so far has revealed that it is easier to adopt decisions for support to campaigns on national level, which is only natural. The process of consultation on national level may be conducted by the Board Member for the respective country and/or national members. The decisions for support of the campaign on national level can be adopted by a simple majority and the Management Board can be informed of the decision.

3. Independent international organizations, institutions, agencies – the profile of participants depends on the issue of the campaign. Campaign organizers often seek the support of such strong and financially sustainable players which quite often decide to take the lead. It is advisable that such decisions should not create leadership problems within the coalition and alter the aims of the campaign.

4. Political parties and other formations – campaign coordinators targeting big public issues may want to receive support from political parties and coalitions, from businesses etc. The issue can be regarded as controversial or at least sensitive. For the purposes of this procedure of NGO involvement, the campaign coordinator shall inform the rest about the support of the political parties and/or business interests, so that each participant can decide about further involvement.

5. Independent eminent public figures, scientists, activists, and representatives of civil society – such independent supporters can be a great asset to campaigns, especially if recognized internationally.

#### *Expert support bodies*

1. International coordination team (ad hoc) – the team may involve experts from the campaign coordinator, other expert NGOs, independent experts, representatives of institutions, organizations etc.

If BSNN is invited to take part in a campaign, the BSNN board member from the respective country may participate, and at least one more BSNN board member or other expert. The team may provide consultation and support to the campaign coordinator on international level. The team can be established after the campaign coordinator has started the campaign and some international participants have been involved.

The Management Board of the BSNN can adopt a decision for the establishment of a standing advisory group on campaigns at the BSNN board to serve as an international coordination team.

2. Expert advisory group (ad hoc) – a pool of independent experts from the partner countries and elsewhere shall be established to be consulted on the technical issues, campaign issues, strategy issues etc. Resources to support the group may pose a serious problem.

The campaign coordinator and the international coordination team form the basis of the proposed decision making structure but they have to keep all the other participants informed and involved throughout the campaign cycle.

#### *The process of decision making*

The following few simple steps aim to outline how the consensus oriented decision making about providing support can be made.

- The coordinator adopts a decision about the campaign, activity etc. establishes its aims and tasks, finds resources, and decides on the object of the campaign and the strategy. After preparation, the execution of the campaign activities on national level begins.

- The campaign coordinator involves other NGOs and partners on national level in the campaign, forming a coalition if possible. If national members of the BSNN are involved, their decision making bodies shall adopt the respective decisions.

- The campaign coordinator addresses international partners and widens the scope of the campaign across the borders. If BSNN is addressed to take part the decision about support shall be adopted by the Management Board in close coordination with the national board member and other national and regional experts.

- The campaign coordinator addresses international organizations and institutions, stakeholders, political parties, eminent public figures etc. inviting them to join in. The campaign coordinator shall inform all the participants about the entities invited to join in and about those which have expressed support.

- The campaign coordinator may take the initiative to involve the expert advisory group and the international coordination team in the update of plans for the campaign and execution of campaign activities.

- The campaign coordinator shall update the parties involved about the timetable and progress of the campaign, difficulties and obstacles, delays and problems, achievement of milestones, prospects in time. Any significant change shall be communicated to all supporters involved.

- It is advisable that the campaign coordinator shall create a communication tool – website, list-server, social media etc. to involve supporters and the media.

- If the campaign changes its aim or tasks, or significant changes in the campaign coordinator occur, the participants shall be informed in writing about that.

#### *Procedures regarding the participation of BSNN*

1. Communication about participation in campaigns shall be in writing.
2. Communication about invitation to participate in a campaign shall be forwarded to all board members and they in turn shall inform the national members
3. Motivated suggestions for BSNN support or refusal of support shall be sent in writing in electronic form to the Management Board. Any member or expert can send a suggestion to the Board. Comments on the suggestions by each of the BSNN board members shall be sent in writing electronically to BSNN Chairperson.
4. Motivated decisions about BSNN involvement shall be made by the BSNN board and disseminated by electronic means and if necessary by other means such as mail
5. Motivated suggestions for withdrawal of BSNN support shall be sent in writing to the BSNN Board
6. The Management Board shall be informed regularly on the progress of the campaign by experts and NGOs involved and shall update all members about it.
7. All important consultation and information messages and announcements shall be disseminated electronically and published on the BSNN web site.
8. Important information messages and announcements shall be sent by e-mail and mail.
9. Messages from any Board member (BSNN Chairperson included) demanding urgent feedback shall be sent in writing by e-mail with "Urgent" in the Subject box and these shall include the feed-back deadline.
10. A platform of communication for campaigns shall be developed for the BSNN website, so each NGO or activist/expert could choose a campaign to be involved in.