

**STRATEGY FOR STRENGTHENING THE SUSTAINABILITY  
OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR IN BULGARIA**

**Project Objectives**

The Strategy for Strengthening the Sustainability of the Non-governmental Sector in Bulgaria is a two-year project (2005-2006), which is carried out in Bulgaria by a consortium of non-governmental organizations with leading partner Open Society Institute – Sofia. The project aims at enhancing the capacity of the non-governmental sector in Bulgaria for more effective participation in the decision-making process and advocacy in exerting influence on the formation of social policies on a central and local level.

**Project Implementation Tools**

**On a national level** the project objectives are implemented by means of assisting the consolidation process of the non-governmental sector on a thematic basis. Thus, in the period 2005-2006 six families (networks of non-governmental organizations in the fields Human Rights, Social Policy, Regional and Local Development, Environment Protection, Media and Culture and Art) were created.

The organizations, members of the families, identified priority fields for joint action with the view to the effective influence and participation in the formation of social policies, and in 2006 they launched seven advocacy campaigns in key spheres of the respective thematic fields.

The families are open to new organizations with regional/local geographic coverage or complementing spheres of expertise in the relevant thematic field. The criteria for the new organizations are developed and approved by the families themselves.

For more details of the structure, composition and activities of the families please go to <http://www.open-bg.net/>.

**On a local level** the project is carried out by means of financing and providing consultancy to local or regional non-governmental organizations or civil groups, which run advocacy campaigns for change or influence on local/regional policies. In 2006, 31 advocacy campaigns were funded in the spheres Social Policy, Environment Protection, Local and Regional Development and Human Rights Protection. Two three-day training seminars on advocacy were carried out, in which participated representatives of the organizations running local/regional advocacy campaigns and members of the NGO families.

Methodologically the project activity is assisted by the following research:

The European and American experience in creating non-governmental networks for the representation of interests, advocacy and lobbying.

The research aims at systemizing the available interest representation models through coalitions and networks on a European level and in the USA, without claiming to be exhaustive. The research also examines the interest representation formats in other sectors, such as business and labour interests, which apart from providing curious models, account to a large degree for the logic of behaviour of the European institutions towards the various types of interests and their institutionalized role in the decision-making process.

Survey in the process: Issues and possibilities for effective joint action of the non-governmental sector in Bulgaria for the change of policies and practices.

The survey is mainly focused on consolidation and advocacy as key concepts both for the project and for the sector with the view to improving its political effectiveness. The survey claims no representation and comprehensiveness. It is rather part of the effort to build a more systematic and complete data base on the project.

The research is available at <http://www.open-bg.net/>.

**Complementing Initiatives and Activities**

The Civil Society Program of Open Society Institute – Sofia developed and funded projects, which complement the program activities of the Strategy for Strengthening the Sustainability of the Non-governmental Sector in Bulgaria. The main purpose of these initiatives is to improve the image of the NGO sector in Bulgaria and its relations with the public and private sectors, and the media.

The projects are as follows:

- Developing a communication strategy of the non-governmental sector in Bulgaria;
- Developing Who is Who in the Bulgarian NGO Sector Catalogue;
- Wide consulting process for the need of a Code of Ethics for the NGO Sector.

**Experts and Partners**

- Foundation for Local Government Reform, <http://www.flgr.bg/>;
- Interethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation;
- BlueLink Information Network <http://www.bluelink.net/>;
- Network of the Open Society Clubs in Bulgaria;
- Asya Kavrakova, Open Society Institute – Sofia;
- Ginka Kapitanova, Executive Director, Foundation for Local Government Reform;
- Kalina Bozeva, Chairperson of Interethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation;
- Milena Bokova, Executive Director, BlueLink Information Network;
- Stoyan Nikolov, Representative, Network of the Open Society Clubs in Bulgaria;
- Lyuben Panov, Executive Director, Bulgarian for Non-for-Profit Law;
- Dimitar Sotirov, Executive Director, Bulgarian Media Coalition;
- Tomislav Donchev
- Boyan Zahariev
- Elena Trifonova – IRIS
- Gergana Vasileva
- Dimitar Ivanov
- Petko Georgiev – ProMedia
- Tsveta Petkova
- Zhivka Belcheva
- Mariana Milosheva

**Funding**

Civil Society Trust in Central and Eastern Europe. Information on the activity of the Civil Society Trust in Central and Eastern Europe is available at: <http://www.ceetrust.org/>.

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