





RECIPES FROM POLAND: UKRAINIAN VARIATIONS ARE POSSIBLE

(practical hints on Ukrainian-Polish co-operation in the civil society)

This publication is based upon the materials of the study visit arranged for the representatives from ten Ukrainian public organisations to Poland (December 2003).

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Milieukontakt Oost-Europa is an independent foundation from the Netherlands that was established in 1988. The objective of Milieukontakt Oost-Europa is to strengthen environmental NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States (CEE/NIS) to enable them to influence environmental policy and environmental behaviour in their societies. Milieukontakt pursues this aim by giving support and advice, and by encouraging and establishing co-operation between environmental organisations in the Netherlands and in CEE/NIS countries.

Main aim «Ukrainian NGO community reaching out» Programme is to increase sustainability of the environmental NGO community in Ukraine through better cooperation as a result of improved communication skills and strategies. The programme will have a national outreach.

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PREFACE

This report reflects the outcome of discussions and meetings with Polish NGOs and the experiences of Ukrainian participants during the study visit to Poland. Ukrainian participants working in the field of environment and sustainable development met several of their colleagues in Poland.

Since 1st of May 2004 Poland is EU member and Ukraine has become for the first time neighbouring the European Union. Although getting closer to the EU, entering into the EU may not be easier.

The accession has many consequences for those countries who enter as well as those countries who are the new neighbours of the European Union. Where the European Union encourages free traffic of information, persons, and goods, the exchange between the European Union and the neighbouring countries tends to be more difficult. A new barrier that hinders the possibilities for exchange and cooperation are the requirements for visa. People from Ukraine and Belarus are already obliged to obtain a visa for the accession countries. And soon the new neighbours may require a visa for people from all new accession countries. The obstacles in traveling is a set-back for the civil society groups. Especially when the countries are large, and the infrastructure and the places where to obtain a visa are limited.

Donors are anticipating on the changes in Europe and try to encourage new cooperations. There are currently several programmes that encourage partnerships between Poland and Ukraine. Civil society programmes stimulate projects between NGOs.

Aiming at strengthening the environmental NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe Milieukontakt Oost-Europa, a environmental foundation in the Netherlands, started up its first activities in 1988. The first project consisted of support to NGOs and citizens groups in Poland. Now many years later it is encouraging to see that NGOs from Central Europe who received support and had intensive cooperation with Western European NGOs begin to develop their own contacts and cooperation eastwards.

One of the aims of this study visit was to encourage new cooperation. For the civil society it is useful to exchange information and to share skills and experiences among NGOs. With this study visit we wanted to take things further and stimulate also new partnerships.

Going beyond aims of exchange and encouraging new cooperations however it is a long way to go. Building up partnerships requires time and possibilities to get to know each others culture and background. It also needs time to discuss the ideas and values you share and the things that make you different from others. Both, things in common and differences can contribute to make a partnership successful. Getting to know each other is a pre-requisite to build up a common basis for cooperation.

*Willem Tjebbe Oostenbrink,
Programme manager,
Milieukontakt Oost-Europa.*



What we did search for in Poland

By accessing the EU our nearest western neighbour Poland is not actually moving away from us. Ukrainian public environmental movement is intently watching the development of the civil society across the border being thankful to neighbours for hints, real examples and findings that we can make use of and mistakes that we can avoid.

Ukrainians made numerous trips to Poland looking for experience. The visit about which its participants and organisers tell about in this publication has been one more step into joint Ukrainian-Polish co-operation in a renovated Europe. Ten representatives of Ukrainian environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) took part in the study visit. We hope that our impressions, disagreements and propositions will become useful to many Ukrainian and Polish public organisations planning to initiate co-operation.

WHAT WE DID SEARCH FOR IN POLAND (EXPECTATIONS)

- Setting up contacts between Polish and Ukrainian NGOs.
- Establishing a joint co-operation platform for environmental NGOs of Ukraine and Poland, defining means and methods for concerted activities.

- Studying ways of the development and coordination of thematic networks as well as the involvement and motivation of activists.
- Raising awareness on the activities of Polish environmental NGOs and donor organisations.
- Introducing our own experience, discussing perspectives for concerted national campaigns in Ukraine and in Poland.
- Finding out about Polish experience in disseminating information via mass media on the main principles of a sustainable development.
- Familiarising with experiences from Polish NGOs as to carrying direct actions, particularly targeted at the creation of natural protected areas.

- Receiving information on methods of co-operation between the public and the authorities, mechanisms of co-operation with state bodies (comparing the situation in both countries).

We are absolutely convinced that there are real opportunities for more effective international activity concerning environmental protection, particularly in the following directions:

- bringing solution to problems, which are common in shared natural regions divided by state borders;
- resolving the problems of territories, which are similar in nature of development (industrial regions, recreational areas, natural protected territories) in both countries;
- participation in decision-making on socio-economic matters vital for both countries (transport issues, regulating genetically modified organisms, ideology of goods consumption etc.).

Combining efforts of organisations in different countries is crucial for bringing solutions to problems that spring up at some stage of the development of society and require local

peculiarities be taken into account. International co-operation of NGOs attests comprehensiveness and earnestness of their intentions, gives better chances for an efficient technical and financial support.

Sustainable development: to do the impossible due to concerted actions

Our visit starts in Warsaw. Out of numerous environmental organisations that are working in the capital we chose only those most interested for the Ukrainian group. The first meeting in the Institute for Sustainable Development headed by Andrzej Kassenberg turned to be very rewarding and became one of the most important for all participants of the study visit.

The Institute was found 13 years ago to study the experience of European countries and to adapt this experience to Polish conditions, which would allow not to repeat the mistakes of the West. This is one of the first environmental public organisations in Eastern Europe. The activity is concentrated around climate change, environmental protection in the context of the European integration of Poland, access to information regarding the environment. It is being financed through grants, and takes part in tenders on different programs. The partners of the Institute are NGOs, the government and the ministries, the parliament, scientists, mass media and the representatives of business sector. The Institute is not affiliated with political parties.

The Institute's activity is laid in the three directions:

mutually beneficial fulfilment of objectives of the society, business and environment protection - these are the pillars for a successful development of the mankind;

creation of the platform for finding common interests in specific cases;

approaching the future: the Institute protects the interests of coming generations that are unable to influence modern processes.

Employees of the Institute take part in the meetings of the parliamentary commission on environment protection and of some others, always using opportunities to express their views, to convince the opponents and to present own arguments.

Annually, 20-40 projects are implemented, which are primarily small and easier to be fundraised.

The Institute provides support to environmental restructuring of a tax system targeted at lowering taxes on labour, the creation of new job places and increasing taxes on the use and extraction of coal, oil and gas. Elaboration of an alternative transport policy is another project of the Institute. Its idea is to contain the development of transport infrastructure through the lowering of transport needs, introducing limits on vehicle emissions (the introduction of environmentally friendly transport) and the development of a renewable energy production. According to preliminary calculations the implementation of this program is cheaper compared to traditional construction of roads and other transport infrastructures. It is so because business structures strive to build roads to satisfy their interests, and the Institute seeks to define and to ground the necessity of such constructions for the state.

Is it possible to adapt this experience in our country? Let's say, in transport regulation, as it's a burning issue for Kyiv in particular, or in attracting business resources? For sure, every country has its specific conditions and to simply transfer the



experiences to another country or city is impossible. But it's always possible to find useful examples and solutions. For instance, there is an experience in the creation of specialised municipal funds, which are supported by donations from various commercial organisations. The way that these resources are used is defined by the programme of the fund itself. In other words, a public organisation that receives the money is not dependant on one particular company. As to the transport policy, the experience of Poland demonstrates that it is worth setting specialised commissions that would include different stakeholders. In this case the issue of transport regulation can be solved in the atmosphere of common interests when people speak common language.

One of the newest projects of the Institute is connected with providing "green" jobs. It means, jobs at enterprises involved in environmentally friendly activities. In Poland, where unemployment rate is about 18%, this programme helped to attract people's interest to a new idea and demonstrated them the opportunity to earn money. Some ideas have already been brought to life, quite many people learned to think appropriately and see opportunities, which they had not been noticing before. People become involved in agrotourism, dismantle old cars, work as bike rickshaws etc.

„This visit helped me to see new aspects of a sustainable development subject, such as founding organic agriculture in industrial regions, providing new environmental jobs. Apart from that, we felt that Ukrainian and Polish NGOs now face similar problems more often than in the beginning of the 90s. Here I mean relations with business, especially transnational corporations, the same kind of financing (mostly through foreign grants). But we also could clearly see that the system of co-operation with authorities and the availability of local envi-

ronmental funds to NGOs are much different from our situation - for Ukrainian NGOs it is complicated to access this kind of funds. In Poland they manage these funds jointly”.

Ihor Malakhov, National Ecological Center, Kryvyy Rig branch.

National Ecological Center, Kryvyy Rig branch

The goal of the organisation is to combine efforts of scientists, journalists, teachers and other citizens in fulfilling the objectives of sustainable development that is based upon the principles of common development of the nature and the society. Activities: holding trainings, seminars, round tables; publishing information bulletins, brochures, books; carrying information campaigns including on TV; developing local environmental action plans in small settlements in Ukraine; participation in international programmes aimed at the implementation of the Aarhus convention and Dniper river rehabilitation.

It is clear that it is not only Warsaw where people are interested in the issues of a sustainable development. Lowsilesian Foundation of Sustainable Development in Wroclaw looks more informal. Its activity is concentrated on projects that foster the solution of particular problems by combining stakeholders' efforts.

Krzysztof Smolnicki, president of the Foundation, spoke on how the organisation started its activity in the 80s. Features of that time: Chornobyl demonstrations, protests against the factory producing the alloy of iron and chrome. Later it was a dynamic and comprehensive development, international and Polish-Czech projects on tourism development, installation of refinery equipment at the territories close to the Czech border, attempts of co-operation with self-governance bodies. The organisation needed over 10 years to introduce the notion of a comprehensive problem solution; not just the projects were

improving, but people who were implementing them. By the way, it caused a new problem: quite a number of active volunteers have finally become influential politicians and detached from the activities of their organisation. Nowadays in the result of co-operation of different people and organisations the programme on sustainable development in 16 gmins (administrative and territorial unit that by size is almost equal to the district in Ukraine) was founded. One of the special subjects was: the preparation of the complex atlas of territories, which would demonstrate biodiversity, soil quality, historical maps, inventory etc. The atlas turned to be useful for everyone desiring to build something as it provides comprehensive information needed to choose the place.

Understanding the importance of disseminating the experience of a balanced economic management means bringing a lot of attention to working with mass media. „And to avoid extra problems - tells Krzysztof Smolnicki - we do PR for ourselves and for others as well: we publish quarterly magazines, develop programmes for radio and TV, run media project in the Internet; we made 50 programmes on different methods of economic management along with the development of natural territories, and we also made several films. Some shots are unique. We have installed a camera in the nest of a stork, and it's a pity he had no female then”.

„In Ukraine we are particularly interested in Chornogora, mythical Carpathians...”, says Krzysztof.

„The program of the visit was well thought and rich in content. The geography of the visit was nicely planned what gave more opportunities for setting up partnership contacts based on common regional interests. The interest was demonstrated particularly by the representatives from industrial regions of

Poland and Ukraine, which face similar hardships in overcoming a technogenic degradation of natural environment.

The idea of partnership on saving rivers of the Baltic basin is also interesting. The variety of Polish organisations that we met had been well selected. We visited a professorial organisation, the image of which is characteristic of respectability and academic nature. We were also welcomed by quite informal “typical” NGOs where people primarily do not wear ties. The organisations are different in directions and methods of work, but still they had something in common: devotion to nature conservation and the protection of citizens environmental rights, high professionalism and a large experience.”

Yuriy Vasilov, Association „Our Home”, Ivano-Frankivsk.

Biosafety and agriculture

This is a subject that many NGOs in Poland are actively involved in. Nonetheless, each organisation has its special approach. For instance, Warsaw Institute for Sustainable Development, as Aleksander Kedra - the co-ordinator of a corresponding Institute's programme notes, is good at holding public debates and public awareness campaigns. As there are quite different opinions on genetically modified organisms in different institutions, controversies often turn into quarrels and bear no fruit in the end. “We have decided to step out this circle - says Aleksander - and to prepare a publication presenting all points of view. We asked all the stakeholders to write about their ideas on this matter. We asked for opinions of the ordinary citizens. We do not impose our own opinions (we keep the neutral position), but we invite public organisations to defend their positions. This helps us not to push away businessmen, geneticists and consumers. This approach allows to resolve conflicts and to avoid them.” In four cities public debates were hold in

different forms: expert meeting, open debates for interested public with participation of specialists, where issues of ethics of GM applications were discussed. It turned out that many myths disappear during such meetings. For instance, all scientists admitted that a myth about a zebra cow creates prejudiced aura around science. About 400 participants came to one of the meetings, 10 of them were journalists. The issues that were discussed were tied up to local conditions. In Lublin a report was published and a press-conference was hold.

Social Ecological Institute is also involved in the GE subject. Although the activity of the organisation, which was presented to us by its director Ewa Sieniarska, is quite versatile (holding Earth day celebrations, actions against waste incineration and for returning the bottles etc.) the biosafety subject is touched on in many projects. There is a special publication covering GMO issues "Trendy mistress" with 100 thousand print run financed by the National fund on natural environment and water protection. The dissemination of a postcard "GMO – you have a right to chose" with address to the Minister of environment and the Minister of health on the return side was also successful. In Poland, amendments to the biosafety law have been introduced within the current legislation, which is similar to that of the EU. Therefore it's necessary to keep an eye on what is being done in this matter in Western Europe. For sure, the monitoring of GMOs spread should have been introduced, but Poland does not possess certified laboratories able to carry needed studies. Unapproved GM varieties are present on the market. The pressure of transnational companies that introduce GMOs, such as Monsanto and Aventis, is evident. Nice looking coloured magazines advertising the activity of these companies are distributed among farmers.

Unfortunately the law does not stipulate the labelling of products containing GMOs. Ewa is rather critical in her attitude towards transnational corporations, being convinced that huge US financing is backing them, which explains why the Polish government does not support the activity of organisations like hers against the spread of GMOs. But, the Social Ecological Institute made all efforts to demonstrate in practice that an alternative to biotechnological way of farming exists. Therefore the Institute supports the development of organic farming based on local traditions using animal breeds tolerant to diseases and providing clean products. At first they spent grant money from the Global Environment Facility to purchase cows and chickens of local breeds and distributed them for free among 40 farms under one condition – after five years farmers-beneficiaries have to give one female animal to be granted to some other farmer. Farmers create pools to be better able to sell their animal products and recreate agricultural biodiversity. Among crop plants distributed among farmers was the Ortish wheat that can grow on poor dry soils, it is sturdy and has good dietary qualities and old apple varieties grafted into Antonovka variety.

Polish Ecological Club Gliwice Circle is also interested in the subject of a sustainable agriculture. Gliwice is one of the most contaminated industrial areas in Poland. Talking about agriculture may seem inappropriate here, but Maria Staniszevska, Club's board member, speaks even on the development of a unique environmental tourism in the region. Gliwice experience of attracting attention to the development of environmentally friendly agriculture and sustainable consumption may turn useful for industrial regions of Ukraine. The projects implemented by this organisation are aimed at the

integration of Poland to the European Union and harmonisation of the approaches of the EU and Poland to a sustainable agriculture.

Natural reservation and green tourism

Milych is a small town not far from Wroclaw. We went there with several objects of interest in mind: environmental school, local gmina, a landscape park „Barych river valley”. But it turned out that the town is first of all a beautiful and picturesque place - forests, remnants of an ancient fortress, and a specialised environmental school, where adolescents get additional education on environmental subjects, situated in the medieval castle. The biggest treasure of this area - forests and lakes. 50% of the territory is covered by forests, ornithological reserve shelters 260 bird species. 3 thousand hectares are covered by lakes, what makes it the largest lake complex in Europe founded over 700 years ago. Local inhabitants breed carps, annual fish sale thus makes 200 thousand tones. 90% of gmina’s territory is situated right in the landscape park. Local population is not very happy to such a neighbourhood as it restricts economic activity; unemployment rate hits 20% here. Most of the population is engaged in activities connected with nature - fishing, wood processing, tourist services.

Our group is especially interested in landscape park management, the treatment of natural objects and opportunities for using the territory for the development of agrotourism, the treatment of forests and socio-economic aspects of the development of wood processing industry. A very lively discussion is constantly reverting to these issues, as in our country the problems of illegal wood cuttings and wood sale to foreign compa-

nies are too urgent. During the discussion we found out that poaching is not an issue for the Polish as it is regulated both by the law and economic interests of the companies. Thus, the procurement of wood is realised according to state plans and abilities of the holding itself. The initial wood processing is accessible within the holding, and foreign investments are attracted to the economy on a mutually beneficial basis. Apart from that, the Polish Forest Fund and the system of regulating and financing this activity through the Ministry of Environment are of real help. Most of job places in the region are concentrated in wood processing industry, smaller amount - in the treatment of the landscape park, and an increasing number - in agricultural tourism. The gmina supports the development of tourism and the farmers, this is what they believe is their future. Even now here come many tourists not only from Poland, but from different countries of Europe, who are mostly attracted to having rest in natural environment and comfortable living conditions, fishing, hunting, watching birds from specially equipped view points.

„The experience of Polish NGOs supports the idea that we need to actively combine efforts to reach specific goals. Forming of partnership groups of interested organisations, similar to those in Poland, for resolving vital local problems could be very effective. This is where we need more consistency in our organisation.”

Vasyl Sabadosh, Carpathian Ecological Club «Ruthenia».

Carpathian Ecological Club «Ruthenia»

The Club is involved in social and scientific activity concerning environment protection in the Carpathian region aimed at studying and conservation of natural ecosystem biodiversity.

Starting last year Polish banks provide privileged credits for the development of agrotourism, which are very beneficial for entrepreneurs. These privileges have been introduced as the result of NGO coalition lobbying! The way owners think of this activity and their own opportunities we found out during the excursion around the landscape park, which started in one of the tourist farmsteads. The situation here is very similar to that in Ukraine: at Socialist times people worked for some enterprises that later on started to mess up, everyone became unemployed and had to find ways to survive. The solution was found in organising agrotourism. The business is successful – owners have work, and gmina supports them, plus there are available privileged credits systems.

„The experience of Milych may be taken as an example for a future Roztotchya biosphere reserve, where the network of farmsteads can be organised and a joint advertising campaign carried, local self-governance bodies can jointly work out project proposals for receiving grants.”

Vyacheslav Vanda, Public Organisation «Association on the creation of Roztotchya biosphere reserve», Lviv oblast.

Public Organisation «Association on the creation on Roztotchya biosphere reserve»

The goal is to make all efforts and to spread information on the creation and further existence of Roztotchya biosphere reserve. Spreading information and raising awareness on the idea of a sustainable development through different means - conferences, seminars on biodiversity and cultural conservation; recreation and tourism development, regional and local sustainable development; educational activity, scientific research; developing mechanisms for supporting tourism in the region; publishing regional Polish-Ukrainian bulletin for attracting attention to environmental, economic, social and other subjects; environmental education for different groups

of population; organising the network of institutions in Roztotchya for the coordination of efforts aimed at regional development.

The excursion continues in the park. We drive between the lakes – this is the only road here, it is not allowed to walk or drive in the park by yourself, special paths have been made for tourists, the birds watching is agreed with ornithological center situated not far away, there are special rules for fishing and hunting as well. Just for entering the forest you should get a permission. Specialists from our group who are dealing with forests are interested in issues of forest treating, fighting pests and are very surprised how few people are involved in all these activities here.

In focus: consumer

In recent years in Lublin and other big cities the campaigns aimed at educating consumers have gained pace. The buyers of ordinary city supermarkets were educated through different means that, for example, a bag made of cloth is better than a plastic one, or that drinks should be better purchased in glass bottles. They were informed on where to bring empty glass bottles and other packages for reuse or recycling. Every time several organisations take part in campaigns like this. It was not easy to involve small entrepreneurs, salesmen and mass media into the activity. We often happen to arrange street shows, theatrical exhibitions and concerts in order to capture the attention of ordinary people. Today one may observe the results of such an activity in the supermarkets of Lublin: information boards provide information on packaging materials and possible ways of reusing or recycling them. Shop owners eagerly put

out this information as it demonstrates their image, and it is consistent with legal requirements on providing environmental information to buyers. Therefore, the campaigns turn to be beneficial for all and really raise the awareness of consumers on environmental issues, moreover, leaving a buyer with a nice cloth bag or a card, which remind of messages conveyed by environmentalists.

How to make inhabitants of a big city think about what they buy and whether they really need it? In ten big cities public organisations suggested to the people to consider the idea of a rational consumption of goods. They demonstrated that various house wastes are particularly the result of what people buy without prior considering; lots of extra stuff (like a glamorous packaging), which they actually do not need and which is hard to utilise. At the same time the campaigns turned people's attention to an essential quality of goods by providing information on the ingredients of some products and whether most of them are natural. A special attention was paid to the presence of GM material in foodstuffs.

The project called "Green Lublin" was aimed at conserving biodiversity in the industrial city. Through different means and numerous actions (meetings with experts and authorities, exhibitions, leaflets) the organisers were seeking to make city dwellers aware that the greening means not only creating a landscape, but also an aesthetic and moral approach to the whole system of city living.

All these campaigns form an integral part of a strategic development plan of the Alliance of Associations Polish Green Network. In Lublin (the last destination of our visit) we met its activists and the members of the Society for Nature and Man. Actually, the representative of the Polish Green Network,

Joanna Furmaga, was our guide during the whole visit, thus the introduction to the Network's activity started already on the first day. In Lublin office there are versatile materials, bright handouts, reports on campaigns and projects. We discuss the Network's activity receiving not only answers to our questions, but also illustrations to every action from Joanna and her colleagues.

The Society for Nature and Man was founded in autumn 1994. Later this organisation laid a basis for the Polish Green Network. How is the co-operation achieved within the network? This is a question of Ukrainian organisations. The Green Network is the association of people who think the same, have common ethical principles approved by all participants. Formally it is an alliance of associations, the organisations are pooled in information network, which manages joint projects, coordinates the activity of other small or new environmental organisations, provides consultations, supports a „Green hot line" etc. It also seeks to protect a positive image of non-governmental organisations, which in recent years has been largely attacked. Here it means the opposition to a negative influence of investors. It is quite often observed now in Poland (and sometimes in our country) that environmental organisations voice against some product that is detrimental to the environment, but after receiving financial support from the producers they eagerly become silent. The evidence of some of such cases was brought up in Polish mass media, what created a negative image for the whole non-governmental sector. Environmental NGOs faced public mistrust. Therefore, the Green Network is elaborating an Open Ethical Charter that could be joined, in the author's point of view, by everyone who



likes it, thus declaring own responsibility for respecting environmental principles and a simple human decency.

“I see many things in common with our organisation as it concerns approaches to such subjects as educating consumers, principles of sustainable consumption, the influence of advertisements and attitude of people towards advertisements. Street actions, the involvement of theatrical and art groups for reaching people’s ears and eyes - this is what we also do. There are many things that we would not mind to implement. For sure, our co-operation with the Society for Nature and Man and the Green Network will go on, in particular regarding consumer campaigns.

*Tamara Malkova,
Information center “Green Dossier”.*

Charitable Information Center “Green Dossier”

We educate youth in environmental journalism through the preparation of own publications, writing articles for media, collecting environmental information, spreading information on environmental NGOs and their activities and arranging direct actions. We gather realistic information and disseminate it in mass media, we assist in the popularisation of the principles of sustainable development using a comprehensible language; publish literature to assist NGO activities. Our mission is to involve as many people as possible in resolving the problems of protection, conservation and rational use of natural resources, in participation in decision-making on these matters at all levels.

How Polish NGOs are financed

According to the participants of our visit, grants of foreign foundations is the main financial source for the activity of NGOs in Ukraine. Small member fees do not allow carrying an

active project activity and there are almost no donations coming from the public. National and local funds do not provide required support to public activities of NGOs.

In Poland we could observe a somewhat different situation. Yes, the grant method, well known to us, is also primarily applied. But, in contrast to Ukrainian reality, there are even traditional funds that follow new schemes, for example the Foundation Education for Democracy, RITA Programme that we heard a lot about from Polish NGO representatives.

Maciej Kozyra, RITA representative, told us that Ukraine is a priority for Polish organisations. Politicians like to contemplate on a strategical Ukrainian-Polish partnership. Poland supports Ukraine in obtaining an associated membership in the EU. We have a lot in common: historical and mental connections, similarity of languages. RITA is the programme for Polish organisations, but for project implementation a Ukrainian partner is necessary. The Programme aims to set an efficient system for obtaining funding and reporting. RITA is mainly focused on partnership, transfer of experience, and possibilities to follow-up project results. Among the most successful projects financed by RITA is issuing a CD in Ukrainian “How the Poles made the European choice”. RITA Programme assists in holding actions on supporting the European Union in Ukraine. The programme “Changes in the region” provides young specialists and students from Ukraine, who never visited Poland, with an opportunity to have an internship in Poland.

A totally different way of financing was demonstrated to us in Wroclaw. Lower Silesian Marshal Office, as well as other similar structures (can be compared to a local self-governance body in Ukraine), runs a system of gathering money for using natural resources and divides funds in accordance with envi-

ronmental needs of the region. Public organisations have not the least role in this system. Especially when it comes to awareness raising and information activity concerning the most burning problems such as energy saving or waste treatment. In the departments of environmental protection of the voivodship they are convinced that barely anyone is able to do it better than NGOs. Administrative system of Poland is essentially different from ours, but it's important that at the level of local authorities the NGOs that really function and bring benefits are supported from local funds. The distribution of financing destined at social development is carried through open tenders, by which self-governance bodies convey social order and provide funding for resolving specific problems. In this way NGOs fulfil a clearly defined social objective. Since recently Polish NGOs have been very persistent in publishing information on the use of money of national and local environmental funds, so that in future their use would be more open and publicly coordinated. For sure, Ukrainian NGOs need to be more active in this respect.

The Foundation Partnership for Environment was another type of financial management, rather comprehensive in all respects, that we had a chance to see in Krakow. The Foundation is a non-governmental organisation, which was running quite many large-scale programmes with participation of many Polish and Ukrainian organisations receiving financing for smaller projects. Krakow organisation was responsible for administering these projects. The representative of the Foundation Andrzej Biderman knows Ukrainian organisations well, as they often become Foundation's partners.

„I will necessarily tell about this experience in our organisation and in the Association of public organisation of Chernihiv.

Most likely, we will translate and use the materials on environmental education. I would also like to suggest founding a coalition on resolving social problems in Chernihiv.”

*Viktoriya Filatova,
Chernihiv Center for Children and
Youth «ARATTA».*

The Foundation is also co-operating with business and authorities, initiates stakeholders' partnership groups aimed at resolving particular environmental problems. Such partnership groups in different cities of Poland work on providing new jobs, jointly search for funds on environmental needs and overcome problems that the public believes are the most urgent.

As to the international projects often financed by the Foundation and implemented by partner organisations, the most successful were, in Andrzej's opinion, arranging «Greenways», «Amber way» bike tours and other tours via Slovakia, the Baltic States and Ukraine; opening of the ethnic center with providing a part of its income to the local school; declaring a local trade mark „environmentally clean products” etc.

Association „Our Home”

Our activity is connected with environmental state of the Carpathians, protection of natural resources and raising public awareness. The pillars of our activity are: the protection of the Carpathian biodiversity; the dissemination of knowledge and experience, the involvement of public in environmental activities and; animal rights protection.

Starting this year the citizens of Poland will be financing public organisations. Everyone now is entitled to order transferring 1 percent of own tax on income of the physical person to the account of some public organisation. The law had been

heavily lobbied by public organisations and finally they reached a success. Now it is the time for advertising own organisations, as for receiving tax transfers from ordinary people organisations need to really deserve people's respect and trust. Otherwise, the citizens will not be willing to do additional bureaucratic paper work and will leave 1 percent, as before, in a general tax list. On the other hand, in order to be in the list of public organisations entitled to receiving this money, organisations need to prove that they are of a social benefit and be enrolled into a specialised state register of socially beneficial organisations. In one word, let's see how it works for our neighbours.

What is not regulated by a state border

Once there was a bear living in the Polish Carpathians. It did no harm, just lived its usual bear life, which was observed by biologists from the distance (using different equipment). The biologists were engaged in studying and protecting big predators of the Carpathians, and the bear was an object of special attention in Poland, but not in Ukraine. One time, being unaware of people's regulations on crossing state borders, it entered the territory of the Ukrainian Carpathians. And was shot. The wounded bear hardly reached its habitation on a "legal" territory and died. This story from a real life explains clearly why Ukrainian and Polish organisations working on the protection of the biodiversity of the Carpathians need to co-operate. Actually, such co-operation already exists and will develop. Ivano-Frankivsk Association „Our Home”, involved in the protection of big predators, has been co-operating on

this subject with Polish public organisations and scientists for several years already.

A future Roztotchya biosphere reserve is foreseen to be situated both on Polish and Ukrainian territories. In Poland it already obtained the status of a national natural reserve and is protected by all corresponding laws, but in Ukraine the activity connected with the reserve's status has just started. Thus, public organisations from both sides of the border make the same efforts to protect this reserve. The grant money they receive for this activity is also shared. The Association on the creation of Roztotchya biosphere reserve together with the Environmental UNESCO Club in Pyaski (Poland) will implement a project on the introduction of environmental education and tourism in Roztotchya with financial support from RITA Programme.

Krzysztof Wychowalek from the Foundation of Environmental Education and Development (Lodz) knows well from his own experience what it means to co-operate with people who think the same: their Foundation was founded by four independent organisations and now is the model of co-operation of several organisations within national initiatives on environmental education. The money for the activities is received from the funds of gminas and the National Fund on Environmental Protection, not without problems though. In Krzysztof's opinion, the procedure of providing financing is not very clear, therefore weak projects sometimes succeed, and there is a possibility for corruption.

The Foundation works with schools of voivodships; some of its materials have been included into the school programme. It is also implementing quite popular projects "The young to the younger", "School in nature", "Environmental paths",

“Green set” (collection of materials on environmental education), holds educational seminars and spreads this experience in Poland.

“The idea of a Polish educational programme “School in nature” is attractive and accessible to us, it might be implemented with our own efforts”, Olena Pashchenko, the head of the All-Ukrainian Children’s Union “Ecological Guard” is convinced. “We plan on elaborating a joint Polish-Ukrainian project on environmental education devoted to studying and resolving environmental problems (for children) and on methodology of environmental education (for teachers)”.

All-Ukrainian Children’s Union “Ecological Guard”

The Union joins children, adolescents and youth interested in environmental issues. The goal is to educate environmentally conscious individualities due to organising fascinating educational activities for children and youth, involving them into research and environmental actions, helping new generation in developing the awareness of belonging to the world that we all live in. The activity is based upon the principles of volunteerism and creativeness.

“Ecological Guard” is the system of civic environmental education and a practical initiative to protect the environment. The Union exercises the systematic approach – combines environmental education, concrete activities, research, introduces self-governance and leadership development.

Projects: «Current, small river, big river», «Clean the Planet», «Re-cultivation of the Crimean lands that survived fires», All-Ukrainian festival of youth environmental creativity “Fresh air”, All-Ukrainian competition “My vote is for the protection of nature”, “Winter bouquet instead of a fir tree”, “Our help to birds”, “Primrose”, “Plant your tree” and others.

Marcin Stoczkiewicz from the Environmental Law Centre gave us one more example of a fruitful co-operation. Lawyers of this organisation are working on the provisions of the Aarhus convention, as they are convinced that their implementation is very essential. Centre’s specialists participate in the elaboration of draft laws (some of them have already been adopted by Sejm), they also submit comments to Polish legislation connected with the implementation of the requirements of the Aarhus convention. In Ukraine environmental legal organisations, such as “EcoPravo-Kharkiv”, are involved in similar activities. The Poles have a rewarding history of co-operation with this organisation in the process of preparing legal acts for the 5th Ministerial conference “Environment for Europe” that was held in May 2003 in Kyiv. The co-operation of environmental lawyers at international level is an integral part of today’s development of international environmental policy. Organisations of this kind communicate and discuss drafts of vital international documents through specialised networks insisting that governments take into account the position of public organisation at a high level. All interested parties should be involved in the lobbying of environmental legislation, Marcin Stoczkiewicz is convinced. This means that organisations should constantly raise public awareness, provide consultations and hold particular court cases.

The Environmental Law Centre, as well as its Ukrainian colleagues, provide consulting services to people and NGOs on legal matters concerning environment protection. The Centre constantly supports environmental NGOs in holding court cases. Unfortunately, this kind of activity is financed the least of all.

„We will surely use the experience of Polish NGOs for the work of a task force “Harmony in international law” and the implementation of the National campaign on the protection of an atmospheric air and people’s health”, says Serhiy Vykhryst, the representative of „EcoPravo-Kharkiv” “And we hope for further development of co-operation with Polish NGOs”.

Kharkiv public organisation „EcoPravo-Kharkiv”

The activity of the organisation is concentrated on protecting environmental rights and freedoms of citizens, providing legal assistance to public and NGOs presenting their interests in accordance with the law, developing environmental attitudes through education, holding seminars, conferences, round tables. Activity in the last 2 years: free of charge consultations and legal assistance on environmental matters within EPAC programme; the elaboration of recommendations for Ukrainian draft laws; consulting on public participation within Kharkiv project on house waste management; publishing a brochure on civil responsibility; holding the 1st national conference „On a green platform” for the 5th Ministerial conference “Environment for Europe”; and holding a seminar on civil responsibility within the 5th Ministerial conference “Environment for Europe”.

WHAT WE DID FIND IN POLAND (CONCLUSIONS)

- It is interesting how Polish NGOs work on their images and present themselves, how they use information technologies (Olena Pashchenko).

- A high quality of work in groups and coalitions which include representatives from different social groups and sectors of society (Serhiy Vykhryst).

- Every presentation was a lesson for us. And what we learnt is, firstly, new and not voiced by us interpretation of the problems that we all know. The example here may be the floods at Odra. To move construction sites away from the river, to naturalise the bed instead of building dams. This is what is even not talked about in our country. Secondly, these are new methodical approaches like, for example, popularising “green” jobs. The idea of introducing environmentally friendly consumption may be widely spread in our country. We think that it might be applied in order to save the Carpathian biodiversity in the context of ~~CEC~~Convention (for example, a cross-border trade in bear bile). The Green Network is a good example for us on how to develop an efficient national NGO network. There is an impression that Polish NGOs do not face problems that are important to us. Particularly environmental problems connected with military activities. They are also not much concerned with the fate of the Kyoto Protocol and mass woodcuttings in the Carpathians (Yuriy Vasidlov).

- We pin hopes that we will be able to use the experience gained during our study visit in Lviv region. We would like to implement new projects on environmental farming in cooperation with our Polish colleagues (Nataliya Cholovska).

Lviv Municipal Public Organisation “Ecoterra”

The organisation aims to participate in the shaping of regional and national environmental policy, searches efficient relations between society and nature. One of the objectives – assisting a tight NGO co-operation in implementing joint initiatives. Awareness raising on pesticide use. The organisation holds conferences, seminars and exhibitions in order to promote environmentally clean products. Apart from that, we also popularise biological methods of farming. We hold public hearings and issue bulletins on environmental subjects.

- We have decided to develop the co-operation with Polish NGOs in respect of „green” jobs, consumer education, and, the most important for today, supporting information exchange (Tamara Malkova).

- For fighting «environmental racket» (when a non-governmental environmental organisation directs its activity against environmentally harmful projects in order to receive some benefits) the Polish Green Network has developed the Ethical Charter. This is a type of a code of behaviour for environmental organisations, which includes the list of rules and criteria for a public organisation, particularly, publishing activity reports, information on financial sources, list of sponsors. Due to this the organisation becomes “transparent” for other NGOs, self-governance and state bodies. If the organisation keeps to at least several provisions of this code, one may trust this organisation and co-operate with it, as it is a serious and responsible partner (Vyacheslav Vanda).

- We should attentively study NGO data bases and look for partners to implement joint projects. For example, to prepare materials of environmental schools jointly with Polish partners for summer camps where we issue newspapers. It is also worth spreading the experience of the Poles through the press-clubs of the Ukrainian Educational Reform Center (Vyacheslav Holovchenko).

Tutorial Council of the Radio and Television College

Organising trainings for journalists from independent media in Ukraine, awarding scholarships.

- My expectations of the visit have been met by almost 100%. Taking into account that it has been my first trip to Poland, and during several days I have had an opportunity to communicate to many Polish colleagues. I may say that this visit “opened” Polish NGO movement to me. The next objective would be looking for Polish partners (based on the received information) for regional co-operation and co-operation on subjects of a common interest. And, for sure, developing practical projects on a partner co-operation. Direct communication between people is of a real help here (Vasyl Sabadosh).

- I believe that what is the most rewarding in every trip is what you can see by yourself. Hospitality of local people and the guidance of Joanna Furmaga made a great contribution to this (Ihor Malakhov).

- I would like to find partners for a joint project and invite them to Chernihiv. This might be connected with the exchange of experience on organising environmental camps, joint actions, publishing and environmental education (Viktoriya Filatova).



What we did find in Poland

Chernihiv Center for Children and Youth «ARATTA»

Comprehensive assistance in educating, bringing up and supporting children from poor families; social support of families, women and children; the creation of conditions for self-realisation of members of organisations; supporting the strengthening of health and environmental education of children and youth; searching and distributing humanitarian aid; running clubs; organising mutual assistance; holding holiday celebrations; psychological help and legal consultations; open co-operation and partnership with Ukrainian and foreign organisations.

Our new Polish friends and colleagues note that the potential and organisation of Ukrainian NGOs nowadays allow to set fully fledged and equal bilateral contacts, to implement projects in which both parties would be equal partners and could resolve problems urgent for each country or the region. Crucial factors for speeding up the reaching of a higher level of co-operation are the arrangement of a free exchange of information and the possibility for a direct communication. In the nearest time it is worth organising a joint Ukrainian-Polish NGO co-operation platform for resolving environmental problems on the way to a sustainable Europe. It is suggested to hold a meeting in Ukraine and thematic trainings for different groups of population on defining key subjects, set up networking, open a web-page, and create experts data base.

Subjects that attracted most of the interest of both parties:

- transport and contamination of environment;
- “green” jobs;
- agricultural activity not harmful for nature;
- environmentally friendly agriculture in industrial regions;

- social work with poor people;
- raising general environmental public awareness;
- ideology of a sustainable development;
- working with children groups and teachers;
- social and environmental aspects of the functioning of recreational territories, natural reserves, biodiversity centers;
- implementation of the Carpathian convention;
- practical implementation of scientific studies on environmental protection;
- responsible consumption;
- communications with mass media.

OUR MEETING – VIEW FROM POLAND

Developing of Polish-Ukrainian co-operation seems to be a great challenge for next few years. We are close neighbours with some similarities in historical background, culture and language. In the same time, on the political level, we are faced with the different models of public life concerning democratic procedures, public participation and citizens activity. These differences could be underlined by new political situation after 1st of May 2004, with the new UE border between Poland and Ukraine. It creates new obstacles and new possibilities in the same time. Both, Polish and Ukrainian NGOs are aware of this situation and would like to develop mutual co-operation. However, it is not easy and requires braking some barriers – mainly informational, organisational and financial ones.

Activities of Milieukontakt Oost-Europa play an important role to help Polish and Ukrainian NGOs in establishing contacts, providing information, identifying potential sources of finances.

A study visit of Ukrainian NGOs to Poland in December 2003 was a great opportunity for developing this co-operation. Several meetings, presentations and meetings helped to know each other, precise fields of co-operation and look for the organisational and financial framework. And, what was specially important - to make everybody enthusiastic about future co-operation. I hope that Ukrainian NGOs got a good view on the environmental movement in Poland, learnt about our activities and problems and felt the atmosphere of our place in the society. Probably, we, Polish environmental NGOs need

some more background of the Ukrainian situation. I think that study visit of Polish NGOs to Ukraine could be a good idea to strengthen mutual contacts and have a wider perspective for the future co-operation.

Both, Ukrainian and Polish participants of the study visit agreed to work together on the specific projects and develop bilateral co-operation between NGOs. All of us, working in the NGOs, know how difficult it is – needs time, energy, good communication, good information and a lot of enthusiasm.

I believe that by participating in this study visit we've done a good job and prepared a good base for the further work. I also believe in the good co-operation between Ukrainian and Polish NGOs in the future – not only that we are all aware how important it is but also because we are pro-active people, who like to do interesting things and meet challenges.

And of course, because we like each other, became friends and had wonderful time together.

*Joanna Furmaga,
Polish Green Network,
Society for Nature and Man.*

