

Supporting Environmental Civil Society Organisations in Belarus and Moldova

Environmental civil society organisations (CSOs) are important actors in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development in Belarus and Moldova.

The main goal of the project “Supporting Environmental Civil Society Organisations” (SECTOR) in Belarus and Moldova is to strengthen the role of environmental CSOs in the two countries by contributing to their development and improving their knowledge, skills, capacities and infrastructure.

This project has been developed within the framework programme “Strengthening Local Environmental Planning and Environmental Civil Society in Belarus and Moldova during 2012–2014” (STREAM), implemented by the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) with the financial support of the Government of Sweden.

Objectives

Activities implemented under the SECTOR project will provide a framework for longer-term support for the environmental CSO sector in Belarus and Moldova. The main objectives are to:

- support the organisational development of CSOs, building their capacity to achieve long-term environmental impacts and sustainability, enabling them to become self-sustaining, improving their efficiency in implementing environmental projects, and introducing organisational changes that strengthen their impact in society;
- enable CSOs to be more actively involved in dialogue with society and decision making on environmental and sustainable development issues;
- help CSOs to promote sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles at different levels; and
- strengthen CSO capacities and networking, as well as CSO interaction with governments and businesses at different levels.

Activities/Organisational development

The main purpose of this component is to assist CSOs to improve their fundraising and project management skills to enable them to carry out high-quality environmental work that corresponds to the national priorities and international commitments of Belarus and Moldova. The CSOs will be given assistance to undertake an internal assessment, evaluating their performance in a participatory manner. This comprehensive assessment of each

organisation's internal capacities, fundraising skills, project management and reporting techniques is designed to reveal both strengths and weaknesses. It will pinpoint key areas in need of development (for example institutional, organisational, programmatic and inter-organisational networking, partnership and communication). For each CSO, the findings of the assessment will be used to draw up a development plan, including short-term and long-term steps, which will lead to better resource and programme management. Organisational development grants will then be made available to help the participating CSOs to implement key actions identified in the development plans.

Organisational Development Assessment Toolkit

Organisational assessments will be carried out using the Organisational Development Assessment Toolkit, based on a similar toolkit tested in the course of an earlier SECTOR programme. The toolkit will be used to help a number of CSOs in each target country to assess their internal structure and values, determine their legitimacy in society and establish the degree of representation of their target groups and members. The toolkit will be adapted by local and international experts to conditions in Belarus and Moldova.

Organisational Development Assessment

Following the assessment, the CSOs will produce a tailored plan for developing their capacities in the short, medium and long term, enabling them to improve their resource and programme management skills and to carry out their work more efficiently. This plan will ultimately strengthen the skills of staff members in organisational assessment and development, and in project implementation. Training and coaching will be provided on key topics to ensure overall organisational success and sustainability.

Organisational Grants

Organisational grants will be made available to CSOs to implement priority aspects of their newly designed development plans. The environmental CSOs that undergo organisational development assessment and prepare long-term organisational development plans will later also receive local or national grants, provided under the topic-specific Grants component, and will benefit from the Capacity Building and Networking component according to the needs identified in their organisational development plan.

Activities/Grants

Under the Grants component, national and local grants will contribute to regional, national and community-based CSO activities and will support CSO dialogue with authorities and other stakeholders as well as thematic networking among CSOs. In addition, cooperative grants will be available to facilitate the exchange of best practice and experience between Belarus and Moldova. The grants will address current priorities among CSOs, based on thorough needs assessments.

Activities/Capacity Building and Networking

This component will focus on investing in the skills and knowledge of CSOs in relation to various key environmental and sustainability issues. It will increase the capacities of CSOs, enabling them to be important partners in environmental decision making and policy development and implementation. It also aims to strengthen the role of CSOs in the local community, enabling them to influence attitudes, behaviour and values in order to promote the concept of sustainable development.

Within this component, two one-week environmental trainings will be organised for CSO representatives (the Master Class and the Young Environmental Leaders Programme), along with exchange study visits. The environmental education toolkit Green Steps will be produced to promote environmentally sound attitudes and behaviour among members of the community by means of examples from everyday life and entertaining games.

Master Class

The Master Class comprises capacity building and training on various topics related to environment and sustainability (including sustainable consumption patterns, renewable energy, food, housing, transport, mobility and climate change). The selected topics will reflect the priorities defined in the sustainable development strategy of each country.

This capacity building will be offered primarily to CSOs that have undergone the organisational assessment in order to address identified capacity-building needs. It will also be available for CSOs and CSO networks benefitting from project support in the form of grants.

Young Environmental Leaders Programme

The Young Environmental Leaders Programme is designed to build the capacity, skills and knowledge of young environmentalists, CSO leaders and CSOs from Belarus and Moldova. It

also tackles organisational and management issues. The programme provides basic training to develop the leadership skills of CSO members and their ability to manage a non-profit organisation and projects in the environmental and sustainable development fields. Advanced training on organisational development and project management skills will be provided in a stimulating international atmosphere.

Each one-month session comprises both theoretical and practical training. The theoretical training will take place in the multicultural setting of the REC's head office in Szentendre, Hungary. Participants will gain practical experience through site visits to national parks, reserves, waste plants, energy plants and other environmental CSOs, where they will learn about the latest approaches to the conservation of protected areas, sustainable agriculture, water resources, waste management and energy efficiency, as well as how CSOs and projects are being managed. The programme will provide CSOs with valuable work experience, allowing them to exchange views and skills and establish links for future cooperation.

Green Steps

The Green Steps educational toolkit will raise awareness about sustainable lifestyles and the positive difference that citizens can make in their everyday lives.

Green Steps will comprise a multimedia CD-ROM that focuses on a range of environmental and development topics, including environmental components (air, water, soil and biodiversity); pressures on the environment (urbanisation, noise, waste); human activities and their impact on the environment (power generation, transport, industry, agriculture, forestry and tourism); global environmental challenges (climate change, resources depletion and population growth); and values related to sustainable development (consumerism, health, citizens' roles and responsibilities).

Study visit

A study visit will be offered to the most successful CSOs participating in the regional and national grants programmes to enable them to gain experience and acquire knowledge from their counterparts in an EU country. One five-day study tour will be organised, similar to the successful study visits organised in previous SECTOR projects. The visit will include consultations and opportunities to meet with authorities, CSOs and businesses to discuss topics selected according to the needs of the visiting CSOs, as identified during the grant activities.