

NGO News

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A spider's thread. A cotton fiber. A copper wire. Each is vulnerable and of limited use on its own, yet each can be arranged within a structure that will vastly increase its strength and capabilities. Thus, many threads can be linked into a web, many fibers can be woven into a cloth, and many wires can be soldered into a circuit. The individual units achieve power through their collective structure. This is the essence of a network.

In the language of Central and Eastern Europe's (CEE's) non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the term "networking" has become very fashionable over the past few

Networking breaks the isolation imposed on Central and Eastern Europe for decades.

years. In part because of a natural human instinct to seek allies and partners, in part because Western foundations began to favor these types of grants, NGOs are actively examining what networks and networking can offer their organizations. Nevertheless, the actual meaning of the term networking remains surprisingly elusive— it has come to mean anything from a casual conversation to the undertaking of a major initiative.

I like the following definition: "the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions." In different countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where the **Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe (IDEE)** has been active in the last twelve years, we have encountered all forms of networking— successful and unsuccessful, small and grandiose, permanent and fleeting, mutually beneficial and exploitive, phony and real.

This is what we have learned:

A network functions better if it has a goal or purpose. Networking for its own sake or, even worse, for the sake of pleasing a grant-maker, is a waste of time. NGOs should network in order to learn from one another, to form ad hoc coalitions and alliances, and to maintain contact with organizations that think in a similar way or face similar challenges.

A network is the antithesis of a pyramid and functions best without a hierarchical structure. Under ideal circumstances, the network should consist of groups or individuals operating at the same professional level, but even if this is not the case there should be a willingness among all participants to act as equal partners. While coordinating centers are often

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NGONews focuses on the countries participating in the Democracy Network Program

Albania ♦ Bulgaria ♦ Czech Republic ♦ Estonia ♦ Hungary ♦ Latvia ♦ Lithuania ♦ Macedonia ♦ Poland ♦ Romania ♦ Slovakia

Networking ▼

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used by successful networks to streamline operations and ensure clear lines of communication, it is crucial that these centers do just that— coordinate, not dictate. Operating a network through central planning will prove no more effective than operating an economy by the same principle; it will cripple the capabilities and potency of the network. In attempting to keep a network as a symmetrical exchange between its components, it is very important that stronger organizations limit their natural inclination to lead and that smaller organizations overcome any conditioned timidity and speak up. This is not an abstract concept. Organizations are groups of people, each of whom is perfectly capable of either practicing reserve or vocalizing opinions.

A network is not one organization with many addresses. A network means a group of different, separate organizations leading their own lives, which sometimes contact each other to exchange information or services. It is why a network does not need a president, director, office, or statutes. A coordinator (rotating or permanent) can replace a president or director, the Internet can replace an office, and a philosophy or ethos can replace written statutes. The organizations within a network do not even have to hold similar viewpoints or share strategies for all issues. On the contrary, they must agree only on one common strategy for one specific issue.

Strong independent organizations can form strong effective networks. One of the most persistent

and damaging legacies of communism, and one which can destroy any network, is a belief system which promotes organizational impotence. For the record: people do not always need a leader to tell them what to do; there is not always somebody who "knows better;" and there is nothing wrong with people or organizations operating at their own speed, in their own chosen direction.

In order to function, a network should be a totally voluntary grouping of organizations that find it advantageous, or at least fun, to belong.

Otherwise the so-called network is no more than a database of names and addresses.

Organizations should be careful. Some groups like to place themselves on a mailing list or in a database just to promote themselves or prove that they exist. Before networking with somebody, it is a good idea to ask some simple questions, like "What does your organization do?" If you are unable to get a simple answer, you may safely assume that there is not much sense to network.

While the network must be more than just a database, it is very difficult to have a network without a database. A coherent and updated list helps members form alliances,

seek partners for projects which require specific skills, and react to sudden events. Because a network's database must be current and accurate in order to be effective, every organization within the database should be both real and active. The **Centers for Pluralism** database, run by **IDEE-Warsaw**, is regularly updated by adding new entities and by

The
Soros Network

More than 24 independent foundations and other non-profit organizations created by philanthropist George Soros are linked together in an informal network. At the heart of the network are 24 country foundations, the vast majority of which are located in CEE. These foundations all support a common mission to develop an open society. To that end, they operate and support a wide array of programs in the region.

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Providing a Platform

The SCOP network helps members speak and be heard

For some groups, networking is a kind of luxury, providing member organizations and professionals with the chance to establish bonds and occasionally collaborate. But for other groups, especially those grappling with controversial issues, the need to interact with partner organizations is crucial.

The **Society for Children and Parents (SCOP)**, began its efforts as an NGO trying to promote a subject which was very much taboo in Romania; the prevention of child abuse and neglect. "One of the biggest and most painful differences between the East and West has been within child welfare, protecting children from abuse and neglect," says Ana Muntean, SCOP's chairwoman. "The communist system was built on neglecting the human being, and the most affected were the weakest."

Embarrassed or ashamed of the issue, Muntean believes many East European governments have chosen to ignore the problem, often at the expense of the children. Individual NGOs which raise their voices, particularly about such issues, can expect to face indifference at the very least, and

**Vulnerable on their own, these NGOs
have found a collective strength
through networking.**

governmental or societal hostility at worst. As the head of one child-abuse NGO in Albania puts it, "We cannot talk about the subject of sexually abused children. It is completely taboo."

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Structuring a Network

The Environmental Partnership re-tools its network

Hand-crafted by a consortium of western donors, the **Environmental Partnership for Central Europe** was founded in 1991 to help local communities achieve greater environmental and economic well-being. Rather than networking existing organizations, it was decided the Partnership's member organizations would be created from the ground up; a Washington office was established as the network's coordinating center, and regional branches were set up in Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. Because the network was entirely created and funded by Western organizations, the U.S. office played a pivotal role in the network's initial operations, acting as a kind of hub which coordinated resources and information. But that is about to change.

The Partnership has reached a cross-roads— the onset of 1997 marks the end of guaranteed support by Western donors. Frightening? Perhaps, but it has provided the Partnership with an excellent opportunity to overhaul and re-assess its network. The decisions it has made are worth considering for would-be networks.

—The Partnership has eliminated its coordinating office in Washington, transferring its responsibilities to a single coordinator living in the region. "Communication between the country offices and Washington was very good, but between the offices themselves, it was not that strong," explains Renata Kiss, Regional Coordinator of the Partnership. With information flowing back and forth between members, rather than a central hub, the network should be able to operate much more efficiently. Kiss' job will be to facilitate cooperation, communication, and initiatives between the Partnership's offices— this includes publication of an internal monthly bulletin.

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eliminating those which are inactive.

A member of a network should not be forced to interact with every other member. The Centers for Pluralism network, which in its narrowest sense has about twenty participants, and in its largest sense a few hundred, allows groups and individuals to choose with whom they wish to interact. This allows them to maximize effectiveness by accounting for real-life factors of expediency, geographical proximity, and personal or political sympathy.

A network requires good communication. When the Centers for Pluralism network started four years ago, it consisted of a dozen people from five countries. Naturally, one of the most frustrating problems we encountered

If you want to create a network, start with a means of communication.

was with communication. Nobody had e-mail; few had faxes. The lesson: if you want to build a network, start with a means of communication. Creating a forum which allows members to inform one another and in turn be informed is one successful way of keeping a network alive. The Centers for Pluralism network produces a newsletter which also serves as a bulletin board for member addresses. Such publications can also serve as "matchmakers" for members wishing to trade services or resources. The CFP Newsletter tries to provide a

forum for this kind of exchange, as well as for discussion of pertinent NGO issues.

A network does not have to be numerous in order to be strong. Six interacting groups can be much more efficient than six hundred "dead souls" in a database.

Networking breaks the isolation imposed on Central and Eastern Europe for decades. Regional networking provides organizations with different perspectives on issues, allows them to learn from one another, and creates a platform for mutual support. In addition, networking can be a lot of fun. It allows NGOs to reach beyond their individual capabilities to achieve concrete results. A good network empowers its members without sacrificing their autonomy, allowing organizations to form a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.

The Orpheus Network Civil Society Project of the European Foundation Centre develops and sustains indigenous information and support centers serving foundations and associations in CEE. This Orpheus network, comprised of 24 resource centers from 15 countries, works to improve existing services and develop new programs and partnerships for the region's non-profit sector.

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A Coordinated Approach to Networking Anatomy of Bankwatch

A network's specialized structure means resources must be pooled in a specialized way. Tomasz Terlecki, coordinator of the Bankwatch Network, leads a back-stage tour of the network's operations.



While CEE's new democracies have been left with a variety of economic, political and environmental problems, additional new threats are emerging in the transition period. In an attempt to address these challenges, governments in the region are actively seeking advice and money from international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the **World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), European Investment Bank (EIB),** and the **International Monetary Fund (IMF).**

These IFIs have a huge influence on national policies, the development of entire sectors of national economies, and the everyday lives of citizens in CEE countries. Negotiations between IFIs and the governments are largely private, with little or no public participation in decisions that have profound impacts on countries, communities and the environment. Decisions being made now in CEE will influence national development paths for many years to come. It is important to act now to ensure that the development model chosen will be based on full public participation. These are the reasons that we

decided to undertake common activities on a regional basis by forming the **CEE Bankwatch Network.**

To accomplish our goals we have initiated numerous kinds of activities. We collect information about the activities of IFIs within the region and disseminate our findings through a regular newsletter. We organise meetings and round tables between representatives of IFIs and environmental activists from CEE. We prepare case studies of IFI-funded projects, critiques of IFI policies, and proposals for more sustainable alternatives. We

How are we able to do all of these things?

We are a network, and that means many people working for a common goal.

also carry out advocacy activities vis-a-vis the various IFIs, particularly in the areas of transportation, energy, and forestry. Members of the CEE Bankwatch Network attend the annual meetings of IFIs and are engaged in an ongoing critical dialogue with their staff and executive directors at national, regional, and international levels.

How are we able to do all of these things? We are a network, and that means many people working for a common goal. One of the biggest mysteries about networking is how to make sure that every member of the network both contributes to and benefits from our activities. The first and single most important step towards achieving that goal is the establishment of fast and effective information channels within the network. To this end, we utilize standard information channels and hold closed e-mail conferences. We also hold general meetings twice a year. These meetings enable members to review and

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COLLECTIVE INDEPENDENCE

When think tanks network, the bottom line is credibility

Many NGOs in CEE have reservations about networking: they are afraid of sharing resources with would-be grant competitors, have concerns about losing their autonomy, or simply distrust one another. Yet almost no group of non-profits have as much to fear as the region's public policy institutes, or think tanks. These organizations are subject to fierce competition for funding, they hold their own ideas as their greatest assets, and they often approach problems from different ideological viewpoints. But think tanks may have the most to gain from networking. Case in point: the 3-E-Net.

The **Network of Emerging European Economies (3-E-Net)** has placed its eggs in a single basket. Comprised of 17 independent, market-oriented economic institutes, the network was recently formed with the goals of strengthening its member organizations and attracting foreign investors into the eleven countries where the network is active.

The strength of this network, as in all networks, lies in its membership. 3-E-Net links more than 200 of the region's most influential economists together through regular Internet communication. These experts assist one another with projects, share data, and critique each other's work. The network's weekly newsletter, "Inside Views," provides a forum to disseminate members' opinions throughout Central and Eastern Europe, Western Europe, North America, and Asia.

"The weekly newsletter will give foreign investors and governments the ability to understand the regional situation by hearing the views of economists in each of the member countries," says Krassen Stanchev, the Director of the Institute for Market Economics in Sofia, Bulgaria. In fact, Stanchev believes the network's efforts will be most welcomed by people working outside of the region. Governments, businesses and third-sector organizations from around the world are now able to plug in to a single entity to

access a substantial group of economists, each of whom has an in-depth knowledge of the financial, economic, and political situations in his or her country.

The network acts as a gateway for governments, businesses, and third-sector organizations, providing them access to dozens of regional experts

According to Viera Gajova, the Director of the **Institute for Liberal Studies**, the information that 3-E-Net provides is valuable because it is being formed outside of government circles. "The information [provided by governments] is not always objective, especially in countries such as ours." By collecting and sharing data within the network, 3-E-Net's members can also move beyond generally available macroeconomic statistics and reports to formulate more precise conclusions. These, according to Gajova, will allow foreign investors to make educated investment decisions based on sound research and information.

Think tank networking benefits more than just consumers of information. "When we have a policy recommendation or draft legislation," says Stanchev, "members of the network come and comment on each other's drafting, and in the end, it improves the value of everyone's recommendations." By linking their institutes together, the members are able to share organizational experiences, new sources of information, fundraising methods, and ways to enhance policy prescription and formulation.

Before the formation of the 3-E-Net in 1997, its member institutes had been cooperating together for a number of years through programs supported by the Center for International Private Enterprise, the International Center for Economic Growth, and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation. Funding for 3-E-Net was provided by the United States Agency for International Development.

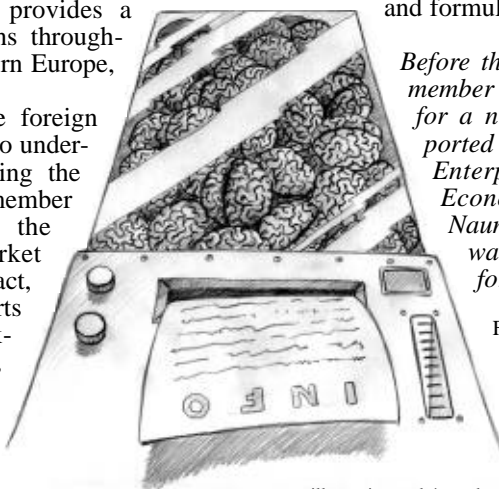


illustration: zoltán szalay

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SCOP continued from p. 2

Vulnerable on their own, these NGOs have found a collective strength through networking. SCOP, with the help of the National Forum Foundation, organized a conference on

With strong members, a clearly-defined mission, and the introduction of regional programs and initiatives, the network can soar beyond the capabilities of any one organization.

child abuse in CEE last October, which resulted in the creation of a regional child-abuse prevention network.

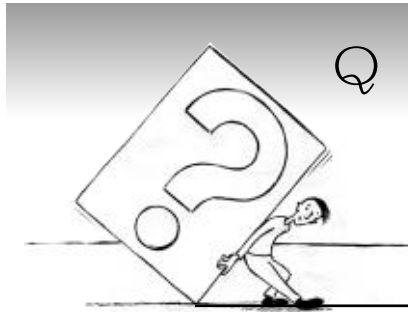
The new network will seek to empower its member organizations. "We will take part in common activities," says Muntean, "which give members a feeling of affiliation to a movement, to a living body through which each member will become more important and more responsible for the objectives of the network."

With strong members, a clearly-defined mission, and the introduction of regional programs and initiatives, the network can soar beyond the capabilities of any one organization.

"Networking will give us greater consideration in the eyes of national governments," says Muntean. "It will allow us to pool our human resources, to seek the most functional ways to address issues, and to provide donors with a streamlined outlet to address a region-wide problem."

In addition to providing one another with professional support, the network has launched an initiative to supply the region with much-needed child-abuse expertise. The SCOP network has introduced an ambitious two-year program to train 40 professionals (social workers, lawyers, psychologists, physicians, and policemen) to become experts in the field and promote a regional advocacy campaign.

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Q & A: THE CEFTRAN NETWORK

Operating in six countries throughout the region, the CEFTRAN (Central European Forum on NGOs Assisting Refugees) Network works to promote refugee assistance issues on both the regional and local levels. From promoting relatively simple concepts, like a free exchange of information between members, to the more complex issues of formulating policy and lobbying governments, the following Q&A with Pavel Tychtyl, Director of the Organization for Aid to Refugees, and a member of Cefran, offers a snapshot view of the operations undertaken by a well-organized network.

Q: Why network?

We can exercise our voice better. Since our many CEE branches provide us with many pictures of the refugee situation, our view is much broader than the confines of a single country. This allows us to accurately point out common trends in the region and offer our expertise to national governments.

Q: What established the need for the CEFTRAN network?

Most refugee-assistance NGOs from the CEFTRAN countries found that they shared some very specific problems. To address these, they found it was not enough to undertake only local activities, but they needed to establish a regional forum. It was also very crucial for these NGOs to discuss their experiences and transfer knowledge between one another.

Q: How does this kind of communication take place?

CEFTRAN branch offices communicate directly using the Internet and fax. We are also in the process of preparing a printed

newsletter which will gather all kinds of relevant information from member organizations. And our regional seminars and workshops provide us with the opportunity to meet one another and establish direct communication links. We are also seriously considering a Regional Information Center which will be able to provide CEFTRAN members, national governments, parliaments, and others with access to information they need in order to make informed decisions.

Q: How does the network plan an overall strategy?

CEFTRAN has a Steering Committee, comprised of representatives from each member country, which meets regularly to decide on policy issues and other network strategies. We have found that it is crucial for the Steering Committee to meet regularly in order to maintain a focused network.

Q: What disadvantages does networking bring?

The main difficulty, rather than disadvantage, is to keep everyone active and part of the common activities.

Q: How does CEFTRAN launch a networked public policy campaign?

First, areas of concern are identified by individual member agencies. From there, the policy is drafted by our Steering Committee and then presented to the major forum for discussion.

We recently lobbied both chambers of the Czech Parliament in an effort to re-shape a new Alien and Refugee Act. Network members organized exhibits in both the Czech House of Deputies and in the Senate to bring exposure to the refugee issue and set up a series of meetings with relevant parliamentarians. When lobbying national governments or parliaments, members of CEFTRAN are encouraged to seek allies. Members of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee were invited to the exhibit, and as a result of their visit, they have decided to set up a similar initiative in the Bulgarian Parliament.

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—Members have decided to seek funding as a group, rather than as individual organizations. “Going for funds as one unit will be easier for us,” says Kiss. “We can prove that our joint efforts really make a difference, which will be convincing to funders.”

—Regional concerns will be handled by the entire network, while local concerns will be handled by country offices. “There are issues— like grant-making, training, and providing technical assistance— which can be made by local boards,” says Kiss. “On the regional level, we will be thinking about broader issues, like the present and future role of the Partnership.”

—Members are working to maximize the network’s visibility. This means everything from creating a group logo to participating in NGO conferences. By creating a buzz about their network, the Partnership stands a better chance to attract funds and publicity.



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A Hitchhiker’s Guide to Networking

Know where you’re going, but not sure how to get there?

Some tips for a safe and easy trip



- ☞ Define the network’s purpose(s). If you don’t know what you’re striving for, nobody else will.
- ☞ Coordinate, don’t dictate. Other organizations may be working with you, but they’re not working for you.
- ☞ Communicate often. Whether by telephone, Internet, newsletter, pigeon, or smoke signals— find a method that works and apply it regularly.
- ☞ Support your partners. And by the same token, don’t be afraid to ask them for help.
- ☞ Create a logo for the network, publicize its activities, and plan



a media strategy. The higher a network’s visibility, the better its chances of influencing government, citizens, or corporations.

☞ Think big. A network can call international attention to problems and issues faced by any of its members.

☞ Exploit each member’s comparative advantage. Some organizations are outstanding organizers; others communicate particularly well; still others are long-range strategic thinkers.

☞ Work with groups willing to make a commitment, and don’t be afraid to weed out those that won’t.

ROMANIA'S NGOs - THE ROAD AHEAD

COMMENTARY



JOELLE ZIEMIAN

A WAKE-UP CALL
FOR
ROMANIA'S NGOs

"Only with loud and often-repeated messages can any NGO become recognized as a resource and force in the policy debate."

The dizzying jubilation felt throughout Romania after the November elections has subsided. Now the Administration and Parliament are beginning to address the myriad of problems facing the country. In two months, much has been accomplished; corrupt officials have

been arrested, seemingly untouchable bureaucrats have been turned out of office, the groundwork has been laid for tough economic reforms, a war on corruption has begun, and a national campaign has been initiated to benefit Romania's children.

Importantly, President Emil Constantinescu has signalled his support for a strong NGO sector by creating a position for an NGO liaison within his inner circle of advisors. And despite the many problems facing his administration, the new president has also made time to meet with NGOs because he believes a thriving NGO community is necessary to Romanian civil society.

A few NGOs are now looking beyond the executive branch and moving to heighten awareness of the sector's work within the Parliament. It was for this reason that the **Romanian Academic Society (SAR)** invited me in January to speak to freshman members of parliament at its "Parliamentary School" in Sinaia.

Rather than reciting the familiar litany of reasons why NGOs are important and valuable for civil society, my talk focused on how legislators can utilize NGOs to more effectively to help them with policy decisions.

In the United States, elected representatives at the national, state, and local levels understand that NGOs offer innovative approaches to issues ranging from poverty to space exploration. Smart U.S. policy-makers recognize that NGOs provide more than ideas—they also conduct studies, draft legislation, hold press conferences, and lobby on priority issues.

If Romanian legislators reach out to NGOs, they will not be alone in their quest to improve the standard of living, build the economy, create jobs, and protect the environment. But the responsibility of forging partnerships does not just belong to legislators. NGOs must also reach out to policy-makers. No legislator can call upon the knowledge and expertise of an NGO if he doesn't know the organization exists.

It is very simple. If NGOs want to affect change in Romania by influencing policy, they must make themselves known. It is hard work, requiring visits to MPs, letters to the government, and media attention. Only with loud and often-repeated messages can any NGO become recognized as a resource and force in the policy debate. A discussion with MPs following my speech in

Sinaia convinced me that NGOs are falling short of this goal.

Senators and deputies from every party reported that, although they know NGOs in their own districts, they had not heard from any of these organizations since their election. No letters, no phone calls, no visits—no sign of life from any of the hundreds of NGOs that allegedly want to make a difference in Romania.

NGOs wishing to weigh in with ideas or advice must introduce themselves to the legislators who can help them. If an NGO seeks to support the passage of an agricultural reform law, for example, it should be sending mailings to the deputies and senators who serve on the Commission for Agriculture, detailing the organization's mission and activities. That way, when the commission considers legislation calling for standards and regulations, MPs will know who to call for counsel. Ideally, every member will become familiar with the agricultural NGO, because at some point the entire Senate and the entire Chamber of Deputies must vote on the proposed law. But the NGO's opinion on agricultural reform will mean nothing to members if they do not even recognize the organization's name.

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In Sinaia, the freshman members also complained that NGOs' interests are usually too vaguely defined. A deputy said, "One never knows exactly what an NGO stands for." The Parliamentarian underlined what we say at **World Learning**:

"A group's mission must be clear and the driving force behind all it does. If the group itself does not know why it exists and what it wants to do, nobody else will either."

Far too often we see NGOs that do not have written mission statements highlighting goals and direction. Unfortunately, legislators, funders and reporters find it easy to dismiss such groups.

A senator noted that NGOs don't do enough to market themselves, adding that one group just blends into another. This observation proves that public image is as important for NGOs in Romania as in the United States, where organizations devote a lot of time and money on issue advertising, presentation kits, press relations and publications. Effective groups understand that, in order to be heard, they must have a powerful, credible, knowledgeable presence in the legislative and executive branches of government. Self-promotion and a good relationship with the media will reinforce that presence.

As the new government sets about its sobering work of implementing real reform and making the country a more attractive place in which to live and do business, NGOs have a long-awaited chance to participate in the debate over how to forge a better Romania. They shouldn't lose this opportunity to make a difference.

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BALANCING THE SCALE

A THINK-TANK CHANGED THE FACE OF BULGARIAN POLITICS. IVAN KRASTEV EXPLAINS.

For the majority of think tanks around the world, the ability to influence public policy is the ultimate test of their effectiveness. Even so, few think tanks can claim that their actions had a direct result on the election of a national president. The **Center for Liberal Strategies (CLS)** in Sofia, Bulgaria, has achieved such a distinguishing feat.

At the end of 1995, only 12 months before the 1996 Bulgarian presidential elections, CLS released a policy-paper which indicated how the country's fragmented opposition parties had very little chance of defeating the ruling **Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)**. Although the BSP was not expected to win a majority of popular votes, the inability of the opposition to back a single candidate would result in the election of the BSP's Presidential candidate.

To enable Bulgarian opposition groups to field a single candidate against the BSP, the CLS suggested that Bulgarian opposition parties hold a United States-style primary election. The proposal called for the primary candidate who obtain the most votes to be backed by all of the participating opposition parties.

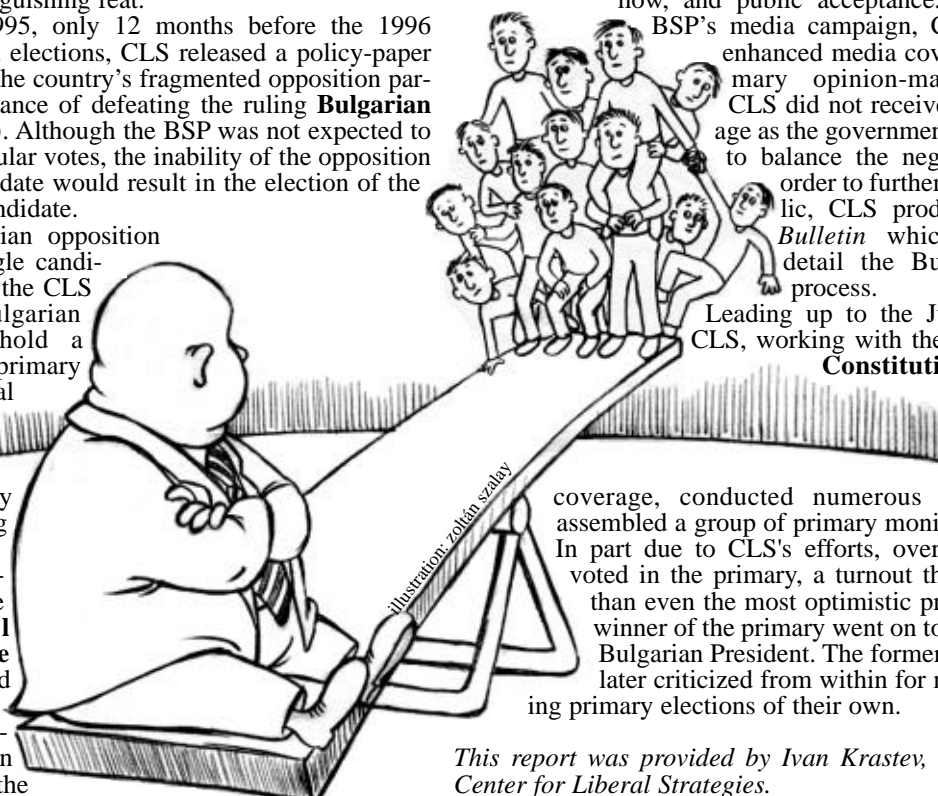
CLS, in cooperation with the **International Republican Institute** (which was involved throughout the entire primary process), initiated an all-opposition workshop to discuss the possibilities of holding a primary. During this workshop, a task-force was formed and CLS facilitated the drafting of an agreement outlining the specific procedures to be followed in order to hold the primary. The result was the formation of an electoral union that would rally behind whichever candidate won the primary.

As could be expected, the BSP and certain segments of the

opposition vocally opposed the primaries. These groups claimed that the primary— a foreign political device— was ill-fitted for Bulgaria's political structure. They argued that a primary would be unfair to the incumbent and that it would be technically impossible due to a lack of time, money, know-how, and public acceptance. To combat the

BSP's media campaign, CLS orchestrated enhanced media coverage of pro-primary opinion-makers. Although CLS did not receive as much coverage as the government, it did manage to balance the negative attacks. In order to further educate the public, CLS produced a *Primary Bulletin* which described in detail the Bulgarian primary process.

Leading up to the June 1 primaries, CLS, working with the Budapest-based **Constitutional and Legislative Policy Institute (COLPI)**, documented media coverage, conducted numerous interviews, and assembled a group of primary monitors. In part due to CLS's efforts, over 900,000 people voted in the primary, a turnout three times higher than even the most optimistic prediction, and the winner of the primary went on to become the new Bulgarian President. The former ruling party was later criticized from within for not having adopted primary elections of their own.



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BankWatch continued from p. 3

evaluate activities from the last six months and develop plans for the upcoming six months. This kind of communication enables us to work effectively, respond quickly to any arising problem, and coordinate our activities in such a way that utilizes all of the potential existing within member groups.

We have established working groups to track some of the major issues we face, but we have also set up groups to accomplish specific tasks, like preparing the network for a meeting or doing some specialized research. If some members specialize in a single issue or bank, naturally they are paired with it. Additionally, we have two on-going programs— on transportation and energy— where we try to learn more about what the IFIs are doing and how

we might change it. All of this builds strong group relations. As members work together, we motivate each other to do a better job, share experiences,

**As members work together,
we motivate each other to do
a better job, share experiences,
and help one another.**

and help one another. Ultimately, this is why people form networks: it is more fun and effective to do things together.

By participating in a dialogue with various IFIs, we lobby them for change. We write policy letters, hold

meetings, do research and push the banks to alter their policies— of course, with varying success. In the local context, we work with groups by providing them with information and organizing meetings between NGOs and bank missions. We monitor various IFI activities in a given country and take appropriate actions whenever necessary. But our actions are not just adversarial. The network is always happy to support projects which we think are good for the environment.

For more information, contact:
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TICHY POTOK:



Michal Kravcik has been smiling since November, and with good reason. Having mounted one of the most successful grass-roots advocacy campaigns in Slovak history, his NGO, **People and Water**, has overcome wide-spread doubt, apathy, and politically-motivated lawsuits to achieve a stunning victory:

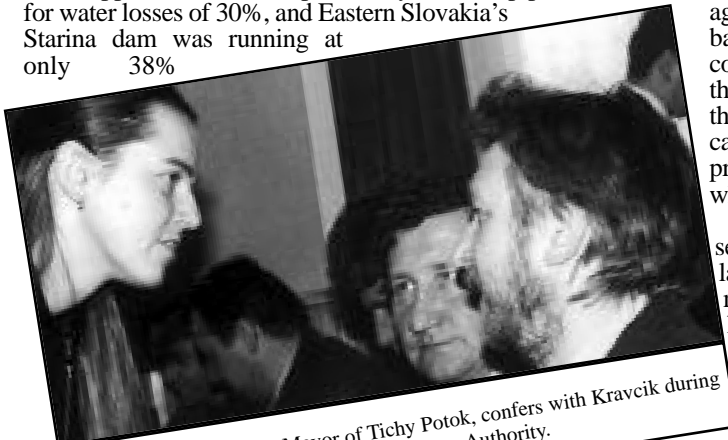
it derailed the state water company's efforts to build a potentially destructive dam in eastern Slovakia. Their experience demonstrates how a small but dedicated NGO can achieve powerful results through a targeted advocacy and media campaign.

The story begins in 1954, when the Czechoslovakian state water company, alarmed by the lack of adequate drinking water in eastern Slovakia, proposed construction of a 65-meter dam in the Torysa River, creating a reservoir just west of the small village of Tichy Potok. As the project fell in and out of vogue with the government over the next 25 years, numerous surveys and geographical assessments were undertaken, but no actual construction ever began. Nevertheless, by the early 1980's, when the project was indefinitely halted, significant damage had already been done to six villages neighboring the proposed site.

The water company's intention to build a dam at Tichy Potok had originally meant the evacuation of these villages, many of them over 700 years old. The villages themselves were in no danger of being flooded, but the livestock and agriculture of residents would threaten the quality of any accumulated water. Living under the threat of forced evacuation and unable to build or expand for over 30 years, the number of inhabitants in the upper Torysa region bottomed out, dropping from 6,000 to 1,500 people.

In 1992, the state water company, with government approval, initiated plans to revive the Tichy Potok dam project. The decision sent a shockwave through the six villages. In the past, the local citizens would have been forced to mutely accept any government decision, but under the auspices of the newly democratic system, they were unsure of how to assert their rights. And so they called upon Dr. Michal Kravcik, a hydrologist who had recently formed People and Water to explore alternative water policies for the Slovak Republic.

Kravcik was no stranger to the region. In addition to growing up in Eastern Slovakia, he had spent most of his career as a government hydrologist, a position that had convinced him of the urgent need for sounder, greener, water policies. Examining the current state of drinking water in Slovakia, where consumption had dropped 25% over the past four years, bad pipes accounted for water losses of 30%, and Eastern Slovakia's Starina dam was running at only 38%



Lubica Ozuganova, left, Mayor of Tichy Potok, confers with Kravcik during a conference sponsored by the Slovak Water Authority.

capacity, he concluded that the Tichy Potok proposal provided an optimum situation for his NGO to publicly challenge the Slovakian government's water policies. The core leadership of

Their experience demonstrates how a small but dedicated NGO can achieve powerful results through a targeted advocacy and media campaign.

People and Water, Dr. Kravcik and Dr. Jaroslav Tesliar, visited Tichy Potok to fire up a grass-roots campaign.

"We spoke to the villagers and the local mayors, and said 'You don't have to let them build a dam—it might not affect you in a good way,'" recalls Tesliar. "And people were shocked. Under communism, it had been a different story. The government would say we will build a dam, and you will move, and nobody could have said a word. People knew that they were now living under a democratic system, that they had more power to stop it, but they still didn't know how to use that power."

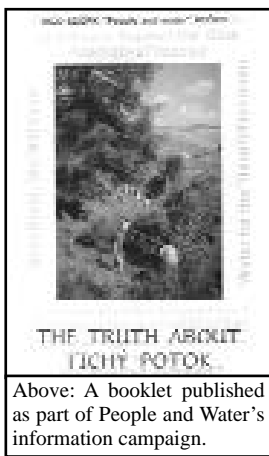
People and Water began to hold regular consultations at the villages, expressing their concerns about the project's negative environmental and sociological impact with local representatives. "The main idea," Tesliar explains, "was not only to speak with local mayors, but to educate them." As part of that process, People and Water arranged two weekend bus trips to other regions of Slovakia, where dams had been built by the state water company in years past.

"We organized the trips so that the people and politicians of Tichy Potok could meet citizens who had once been in the same situation. These were people who had lived in villages where dams were built under the communist system," says Tesliar. "They had lost everything when the dams were built and they were forced to move." At these meetings, the people of Tichy Potok listened to speaker after speaker tell how construction of a dam had destroyed his or her way of life, livelihood, and even home. Many said promises had been made but not kept by the water company—the very same promises that were now being made to the people of Tichy Potok. The trips had a galvanizing effect on the villagers. They became convinced that the state water company had changed little since the communist era, and that their town and way of life were very much in danger.

In April 1994, People and Water prepared what they called the "Blue Alternative" proposal for the citizens of Tichy Potok. The plan suggested a more ecological approach to water management for the region. By constructing an array of small catch-basins and underground sources, it proposed, the water company could harvest as much drinking water as it needed— for one tenth the price of building a dam. Both their alternative proposal and the results of a referendum in the affected villages (which indicated 98% of the citizens were opposed to the dam project) were presented to the government's **Ministry of the Environment**, which refused to consider either.

People and Water responded to the setback by initiating a series of open town meetings with the residents of the six villages. To the NGO, it seemed that the alternative had been dismissed out of hand. It was a situation the organization would have to deal with over and over again: how do you get a government that is not particularly friendly to NGOs to sit up and take notice?

People and Water decided to make their issue more visible. In July of 1995, they initiated a pilot project to prove the Blue Alternative proposal could work. With funding from citizens, NGOs, and local government, the NGO organized an environ-



Above: A booklet published as part of People and Water's information campaign.

A GRASSROOTS SUCCESS STORY



Green Summer: Slovak youth implement People and Water's eco-friendly alternative for water management.

mental camp in Tichy Potok. Over the course of the summer, 45 young people came from all over Slovakia to construct twenty wooden catch-basins, visible and dramatic examples of the viability of "green" water management. For the camp's closing ceremonies, the NGO invited foundation representatives, supporters, high-powered friends, and—crucially important—the media.

"Whenever we have any activities, we fax information to a minimum of 15 journalists," says Jerrod Davis, a **Peace Corps** engineer who helps coordinate People and Water's efforts. "We don't get 15 articles out of it, of course, but we get quite a few. Some of the articles are positive, some negative, but it's all information, and that's what we want to get out."

In October 1995, citing the absence of a building permit, the government's **Environmental Department** halted the continuation of the pilot project and fined the NGO. While People and Water's experts contended the work did not require such a permit, they again used the situation to their advantage by calling the media and drawing attention to their issue. The resulting coverage was substantial. What had begun as a tiny NGO and a group of villagers fighting a seemingly impossible battle against the Slovakian government had become an issue of national debate. For the water company, what had once been anticipated as a quiet rubber-stamp project had become a major headache.

"People knew that they were now living under a democratic system, that they had more power to stop [construction of the dam], but they still didn't know how to use that power."

Jaroslav Tesliar

With a mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) being undertaken in what People and Water considered an illegal manner, the NGO sought to open up the debate. They adopted an "Emperor's New Clothes" strategy, using every available opportunity to press government officials into publicly defending their positions.

With assistance from **USAID** and the **Foundation for a Civil Society**, People and Water organized a series of town meetings in Tichy Potok and the surrounding villages, inviting residents, local and national politicians, water company representatives, agricultural and environmental ministers, scientists, and media representatives. The meetings took place in February and March of 1996, and provided a forum for people to discuss both the dam proposal and the NGO's Blue Alternative proposal.

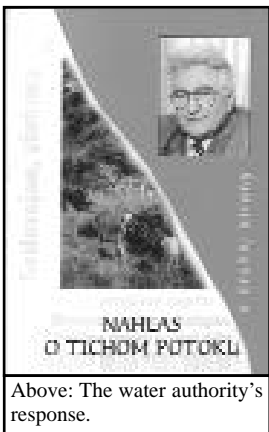
"The meetings were amazing," recalls Davis. "The citizens were not used to having all of these government people out in the

open, where they had to respond to questions and could be criticized. So people were asking very practical questions about the dam, and the officials were getting bombarded with emotions and questions they never had to face in public before. After the weekend, the government officials just crawled out of there." People and Water documented and printed summaries of all comments made by speakers—regardless of what position they advocated. Again, the activity resulted in a massive amount of publicity about the planned dam, both positive (generally from independent media sources) and negative (mainly from pro-government sources). Of great importance to the NGO, opposition to the project had been voiced publicly, shortcomings in the EIA process had been exposed, and government officials, under scrutiny of the public eye, had been forced to take notice.

In November 1996, the Environmental Ministry issued a final EIA report on construction of the project: it opposed the Tichy Potok dam. Instead it recommended the water company concentrate on improving water management and conservation at existing facilities and create conditions for natural water retention and groundwater infiltration; all issues which had been hammered again and again by People and Water. The NGO had brought the Environmental Ministry, initially opposed to even considering an alternative proposal, to effectively signal the death of the Tichy Potok dam.

Barring a decision from the highest levels of the Slovak government to overrule the decision (which could prove internationally embarrassing), the \$200 million dam will not be built. What is more, the Environmental Ministry's decision will likely force the country's water company to steer away from dam-building and concentrate more on ecologically-sound projects.

Ultimately, what accounts for People and Water's success is a combination of tenacity and publicity. The NGO's leaders soundly believed that the water company's policies were archaic and harmful, and they took every opportunity to explain and demonstrate their belief to whomever would listen. "These people didn't have information at first," says Kravcik, who estimates 400 articles



Above: The water authority's response.



Following their victory, People and Water and the citizens of Tichy Potok will explore ways to bring economic development to the region.

have been written about the dam since the beginning of the campaign. "We believe that the more information people have, the wiser the decisions they will make. In this respect, Tichy Potok was not just about water. This was about alternative proposals."

This report was written by Robert Muraskin, a consultant currently working with the National Forum Foundation.

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LEGAL TAX TREATMENT FOR NGOS

In democratic societies throughout the world, it is generally recognized that the tax incentives provided to NGOs and their financial supporters play a significant role in shaping the non-profit sector. Most countries in Central and Eastern Europe are currently considering revisions to their tax codes, including the provisions that regulate NGOs. The results will have a significant impact on the character and strength of NGOs throughout this region.

Through a project with the **World Bank**, the **International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)** has surveyed laws affecting NGOs in over 100 countries. Based on its research, ICNL has developed a set of best practice standards concerning the fiscal incentives provided to NGOs and their donors.

Best Practice Standards

Income Tax Exemption of NGOs

Every NGO should be exempt from income taxation on funds or assets received from donors or governmental agencies.

Income Tax Deductions or Credits for Donations

Individuals and businesses should be entitled to an income tax deduction or credit for donations made to public benefit organizations (PBOs), which are NGOs that benefit the general public or a significant segment of society.

Taxation of Economic Activities

NGOs should be allowed to engage in economic activities so long as those activities do not constitute the principal purpose

or activity of the organization. Any net profit earned by an NGO from the active conduct of a trade or business could be:

- subject to income taxation,
- exempt from income taxation if used for the beneficial purpose for which the NGO was formed,
- subject to income taxation only if the trade or business is not related to and in furtherance of the not-for-profit purposes of the organization, or
- subject to a mechanical test that allows a modest amount of profits from economic activities to escape taxation, but imposes tax on amounts in excess of the limit.

VAT and Customs Duties

-PBOs should be given preferential treatment under a value added tax (VAT).

-PBOs should be given preferential treatment under or exemption from customs duties on imported goods or services that are used to further their public benefit purposes.

Other taxes

NGOs should be considered for exemption or preferential treatment from other tax laws, like property, sales, and inheritance taxes, but not from employment or payroll taxes.

This report was provided by the International Center for Non-Profit Law (ICNL). For more information, contact:

ICNL
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00-970 Warsaw 65, Poland

Tel/Fax: (48-22) 233-946
E-mail: icnl@ikp.atm.com.pl

HUNGARY IMPLEMENTS 1 PERCENT LAW

For Hungary's NGOs, fundraising just became a little bit easier. Following a massive lobbying campaign by a coalition of NGOs, the Hungarian Parliament passed a 1% tax law in December 1996 to benefit the non-profit sector. The new law allows any citizen filing a personal income tax return to earmark 1% of his or her taxes for a specific NGO.

It is too soon to judge the impact of the law (Hungary's deadline for filing 1996 tax returns was March 25th), but its passage has been soundly heralded by the country's NGO community. "This is among the very first steps towards developing charitable traditions in this country," said Zsuzsa Foltanyi, director of the **Environmental Partnership Foundation** in Budapest, one of the NGOs that coordinated the lobbying effort for the law. "The civil sector can be proud of its success."

Taxpayers wishing to apply the 1% law face a relatively painless process. Simply by sending a letter to the country's national tax office with their name, address, and a tax number, citizens can insure funds are funneled to the NGO of their choice. The government has indicated that early returns have favored child- and animal-protection organizations, but have not yet released figures. The best case scenario for the law— if every Hungarian mailed in the 1% form— would mean almost \$26 million for the non-profit sector. But Hungarian NGOs, far from expecting a windfall, seem content that a little bit of money will trickle in. "Hardly any citizen's group believes the new

law will solve all of their financial problems," said Foltanyi, who sees the real opportunity in citizens growing accustomed to charitable giving.

Because passage of the law occurred so close to tax time, it sent NGOs scrambling to inform supporters and the public about the law and their organizational tax numbers. NGOs then asked for help from friends. Hungary's daily newspapers offered discounted advertising space to NGOs seeking to publicize their names and tax numbers, and the **Nonprofit Information and Education Center (NIOK)** joined forces with the state telecom company **Matav** and the **American Chamber of Commerce** to set up a "green line," where organizations could register with a database and citizens could call in to find a possible recipient organization's tax number. (primary source: Budapest Business Journal)

CZECH LAWMAKERS TO WORK ON 1 PERCENT FUND

Hungary is not alone in its initiative to channel state revenue to the non-profit sector. In 1991, the government of the Czech Republic made a decision to set aside 1% of all funds it accumulated through state privatization and channel that money to registered foundations. Law-makers were attempting to grapple with the problems of distributing the fund when the elections of 1992 ushered in a new government. Not placing a high priority on the development of civil society, the new government failed to create any mechanism to distribute the ever-growing fund. But with the elections of 1996, the political climate in the country has again changed, and the new government is seeking a solution to the problem. At issue is how to distribute some \$66 million to the country's non-profit sector. Three possibilities are currently under discussion.

The first consists of a **flat distribution** of the money between all existing foundations. If this method was adopted, each foundation would receive a small sum— too small to fund an endowment, the funds would probably go towards year-long projects. None of those responsible for making the decision is seriously considering this as an option.

The second idea is to **select a number of foun-**

dations to receive the funds. This would provide the country with a handful of foundations with a real endowment which would be capable of providing long-term funding for NGO activities. In this case, choosing the foundations would become a whole new challenge, as the entire non-profit sector should have access to the money.

The third option would be to **establish one or several new foundations**, to be governed by a board which would be partially nominated by Parliament. Again, this would create a whole new set of issues— aside from the difficulty of setting up this kind of foundation, this option might well create resentment among existing foundations and be subject to political pressure. On the other hand, this method would allow for a more satisfactory distribution of the funds over the whole spectrum.

In view of this unresolved situation, the hope of the Czech non-profit sector is that the eventual decision will give preference to the long-term survival of the sector as a whole, not only to a few favored activities.

This report was prepared by Jana Ryslinkova and Megan Hodges of the Information Center for Foundations and Other Nonprofit Organizations in the Czech Republic.

CRISIS IN ALBANIA

How is Albania's non-profit sector coping with the political turmoil? DemNet Albania Reports.

In response to the recent political and economic crisis, Albanian NGOs are actively working together to develop a peaceful resolution. As bullets were flying and foreign aid workers and volunteers were being evacuated from Albania, the country's NGOs were busy organizing round-tables, petitions, peaceful demonstrations, radio and TV spots and interviews, fundraising events, and meetings with the newly-appointed coalition government.

One DemNet grantee, the **Albanian Youth Council** (an umbrella group of over 40 youth NGOs) has started a significant fundraising initiative to reconstruct the recently ransacked Agricultural University of Tirana. Immediately after the university campus was destroyed, the Albanian Youth Council sent volunteers to restore and preserve any remaining components of the library and classrooms. The Youth Council set up 2 large tables in the main square in Tirana to raise money to rebuild, and in their first week raised over \$1,500. The **Albania Civil Society Foundation**, the **Albanian Center for Human Rights**, and the **Albanian Center for Reconciliation of Disputes** placed posters around the capital and faxed notices country-wide urging a peaceful citizens' response and resolution to the crisis.

Albanian NGOs are also very concerned about local and foreign media coverage of the crisis, because it concentrates on only one image- rebels with guns. The country's NGOs have been presenting a more complete and realistic picture to

Although Tirana-based NGOs have been very active, NGOs in the other cities of Albania have suffered greatly.

the local and foreign press, that of people and organizations trying to construct peace and stability. A number of women's NGOs organized peace demonstrations and, together with other humanitarian NGOs, prepared and broadcasted television spots on Albanian and foreign television urging citizens (including a special plea to children) to return their guns to military depots and seek a peaceful resolution. On March 29, ORT DemNet co-funded a peace march with the **Albanian NGO Forum**, the **Albanian Civil Society Foundation**, the **Albanian Center for Reconciliation of Disputes**.

Local ORT DemNet staff worked with organizers to hold a silent peace march of over 400 NGO representatives from approximately 90 NGOs in Tirana. Albanian Youth Council representatives led the march, carrying a large poster with the

The country's NGOs have been presenting a more complete and realistic picture to the local and foreign press—that of people and organizations trying to construct peace and stability.

words, "Messages from Albanian NGOs," followed by other NGOs with their full membership holding posters about their organizations. Much of the Tirana public was very curious and asked for leaflets and information as the NGOs marched through the main square and boulevards. ORT DemNet's local staff prepared 1000 leaflets explaining the purpose of the peace march, the role of NGOs as non-partisan social groups working to establish a solid foundation for a genuine civil society, and a plea urging citizens to join them in their efforts to resolve the problems of the crisis and reconstruction. The march received extensive coverage on local and foreign television, including interviews with Albanian NGO representatives and local ORT DemNet staff.

ORT DemNet grantees are taking the lead in meeting with the newly-appointed coalition government to offer their cooperation in resolving the crisis. One DemNet grantee, the Albanian NGO Forum, organized a meeting between the newly-appointed Minister of Labor and Social Protection and representatives from the NGO community to discuss ways to work with the new government in resolving the crisis.

Another DemNet grantee, the **Humanitarian Association for Labor Invalids**, met with the new Prime Minister to discuss cooperation in alleviating the current crisis. The new government officials welcomed the support and cooperation of NGOs and expressed willingness to work with them in finding a concrete resolution to the crisis and to begin rebuilding civil society. The **Albanian Helsinki Committee**, a DemNet grantee, has been monitoring human rights violations by both the government and rebel forces, and is issuing daily press releases. Another DemNet grantee, the **Society for Democratic Culture**, has formulated and advocated recommendations for a new electoral law for parliamentary elections.

Although Tirana-based NGOs have been very active, NGOs in the other cities of Albania have suffered greatly. The NGO Forum's regional house in Gjirokaster was looted; most of the women's associations in the south are also not functioning because women are trying to flee with their families to safer areas. As a result, the Tirana-based NGOs have yet another role: to support their counterparts in other cities and work with European Union officials to coordinate the distribution of humanitarian aid. ORT DemNet will support these efforts to assist the country's Southern NGOs.

This report was prepared by the DemNet Albania office, the Organization for Educational Resources and Technological Training (ORT).

CALLING ALL NGOS

Albanian NGOs are looking for assistance and advice from their CEE counterparts. The ORT Democracy Network Program in Albania is preparing a news bulletin highlighting comparative NGO activities in other countries as well as creative suggestions to respond to this crisis. It seeks examples of relevant NGO activity in the fields of conflict resolution, economic policy formulation in response to failed pyramid schemes, investor compensation, etc., humanitarian aid, and assistance to displaced persons. If you can provide any useful examples of NGO efforts in times of crisis or can offer any other type of assistance, please send information to:

ORT Democracy Network Program,
office: 2025 "I" Street, N.W. Suite 320, Washington, D.C. 20006;
Tel. (202)293-2560 Fax: (202) 293-2577
E-mail: ortdc@aol.com

N E W S

r e s o u r c e s

FINDING FUNDING SOURCES...

The Directory of International Funding Organizations provides NGOs with concise information on a host of charitable foundations and organizations. Specifically geared for the non-profit sector, the book provides descriptions and contact information for over 200 NGO sponsors, including information on application requirements, restrictions, and procedures. Available for \$30, the directory can be ordered from:

Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)

King's Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4TA, UK

Tel: (44 1403) 710-851 Fax: (44 1403) 711-143

E-mail: biblios@biblios.co.uk



...AND CAPITALIZING ON THEM

Once potential benefactors have been identified, the real work begins. Applying to a Grant-Making Trust: A Guide for Fundraisers walks NGOs through the process of creating coherent and effective proposals for soliciting grants.

The publication, also available from CAF, is priced at \$12.

—See above for contact information—



DEMOCRATIZATION AGENCIES AT A GLANCE

Fortifying the Foundations examines programs that have either directly or indirectly supported the democratization process in East Central Europe. The 100-page book is meant to serve as a catalyst for foundations and NGOs to find one another, as well as outline networking and collaborative opportunities for NGOs in the region. To order, contact:

Institute of International Education

Vigyazo F. utca 4 II/2, 1051 Budapest, Hungary

Tel: (36-1) 132-9093 Fax: (36-1) 269-5436

E-mail: mlazar@iie.hu

RESOURCES FOR NGOs

The Centers for Pluralism Newsletter, a publication of the **Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe (IDEE) / Warsaw**, features regular reports on the activities of many NGOs in the region as well as services and support available to CEE NGOs. Recent articles have addressed issues of fund-raising and organizational information-sharing. The newsletter is available in both English and Russian. To subscribe, contact:

IDEE

P.O. Box 311, 00-950 Warsaw, Poland

Tel: (48-22) 620-8344 Fax: (48-22) 620-8358

E-mail: idee@plearn.edu.pl Web: <http://www.civnet.org>

BUILD A BETTER BOARD

NCNB International, the newsletter of the **National Center for Non-Profit Boards**, tackles issues of importance to any NGO with a board of directors. The newsletter offers an ongoing examination of what roles non-profit boards can and should be taking in the governance of organizations, and how such boards can improve the effectiveness of NGOs. To

subscribe, contact:

National Center for Non-Profit Boards

Suite 510, 2000 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036-4907 USA

Tel: (1-202) 452-6262 Fax: (1-202) 452-6299

E-mail: ncnb@ncnb.org Web: <http://www.ncnb.org>



NGOs AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Role of NGOs in Economic Development, a 300-page summation of an international NGO conference, looks at the ways in which economic development NGOs affect policy and function as organizations. Although the book's tone is global, certain chapters are devoted to CEE, and many of the aspects it explores are universal. Available for \$27, the book can be ordered from:

International Institute of Administrative Sciences

Rue Defacqz, bte 11

B-1000 Bruxelles Belgium

Tel: (32-2) 538-916-465

Fax: (32-2) 537-9702

POLITICAL RIGHTS REVEALED

Issues of civil liberties and political rights are explored by **Freedom House** in its semi-annual newsletter, "Freedom Monitor." The publication reports on comparative freedoms in countries throughout the world, discusses the current activities of the Foundation, and reviews publications exploring issues of personal and political freedom. Subscriptions are available free of charge to organizations in CEE. Contact:

Freedom House

120 Wall Street

New York, NY 10005 USA

Tel: (1-212) 514-8040

Fax: (1-212) 514-8050

E-mail: frhouse@freedomhouse.org



FORCED MIGRATION EXAMINED

Readers interested in forced migration and refugee issues can keep up to date with "The Forced Migration Monitor," an 8-page newsletter published regularly by the **Open Society Institute** in New York. "FM Alert," a new companion publication, provides updates on political, social, and economic events that impact population movements. Available in print and electronically*, they can be ordered from:

Forced Migration Projects

Open Society Institute

888 Seventh Avenue, 27th Floor, New York, NY 10106 USA

Tel: (1-212) 887-0655

Fax: (1-212) 246-1517

E-mail: refugee@sorosny.org

*To subscribe to both publications electronically, send an e-mail to majordomo@soros.org. Leave the subject blank, and in the message field, write: "subscribe osi-migration <your e-mail address>"

A FRESH TAKE ON TRANSFORMATION

All too often, books which explore the democratic and societal changes in CEE are monotonously dry and academic. Rocznik is a welcome change. This short book, published by the Polish foundation **BORIS** (with support from the **National Forum Foundation**), takes a clear, lively look at the restoration of civil society in Poland. From the public's

opinion of NGOs and implementation of tax incentives to broader issues such as the definition of civil society, Rocznik addresses dozens of NGO issues with a crisp and candid style.

To order, contact:

BORIS

01-011 Warszawa, Nowolipie 25B, Poland

Tel/Fax: (48-22) 383-982 or (48-22) 382-672

E-mail: boris@termit.pl



N E W S

i n t e r n e t

TRIPLESPEAK TRANSLATED

Don't know a mail-queue from a majordomo? No problem. "At Ease With E-Mail: A Handbook on Using Electronic Mail for NGOs in Developing Countries" is a practical guide for NGOs venturing into the world of electronic communication. Available in English, French, and Spanish. Contact:

Friedrich Ebert Foundation
 950 Third Avenue New York, NY 10022 USA
 Tel: (1-212) 688-8770
 E-mail: fesny@undp.org

LONELY SCHOLAR SEEKS PARTNER...

Due to a communist system that stifled open discussion in the social sciences, and the generally poor economic conditions that have left universities in the region with few resources, many CEE professors and students are not integrated into any kind of scholarly network. The **Civic Education Project's** (CEP's) new On-Line Partners Program has been designed to match Eastern and Western scholars and students with one another. As part of the initiative, CEP is now recruiting Westerners to become on-line partners— participants will be matched to scholars or graduate students in CEE or FSU who share their academic interests and may occasionally require a marginal amount of assistance. Interested parties should contact:

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 Civic Education Project
 1140 Chapel Street, 2nd Floor, New Haven, CT 06510 USA
 Tel: (1-203) 781-0263 Fax: (1-203) 781-0265
 E-mail: rkim@cep.yale.edu Web: <http://www.cep.yale.edu>

RADIO FREE EUROPE PICKS UP DIGEST



As of April 1, **Radio Free Europe (RFE)** has taken over production of the regional daily news digest formerly produced by **OMRI**. The daily briefing, now called **Newsline**, will feature breaking news from CEE and FSU, as well as analytical materials and special reports from RFE correspondents. To subscribe, send an e-mail to <list-serv@ascu.buffalo.edu>. In the text of the message, type <subscribe RFERL-L YourFirstName YourLastName> and send the message.

INTERNET FELLOWSHIPS IN ARMENIA, MOLDOVA, RUSSIA

The **International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX)** has called for applications from U.S. citizens who are interested in applying for year-long Internet fellowships in Armenia, Moldova, and Russia. Fellows will be responsible for promoting Internet access and training at universities, libraries, and NGOs. The application deadline is April 15, and fellowships will begin this summer. For more information or application procedures, contact:

Jane Belenky Smith Program Officer IREX/Washington Fax: (1-202) 628-8189 E-mail: jbelenky@irex.org	Bruce McClelland Director, Internet Access and Training Program IREX/Moscow Fax: (7-095) 203-5966 E-mail: bmcclell@irex.ru
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THE FUTURE OF GIVING ?

Scrolling on-line through a list of projects, you pause to consider one which catches your eye— a school group in Ukraine is looking for \$1,000 in order to purchase a computer. You choose to make a donation, follow a few links, click and— Funded! You are sent an invoice for your pledge, and later on a thank-you note for your tax-deductible donation.

Futuristic daydream? Better. **The Virtual Foundation** is the real thing— a new example of how the Internet can be used by people living in one part of the world to provide concrete assistance to people in another. Beyond offering a new fundraising opportunity to the NGOs of CEE, the concept of a virtual foundation has broader implications— it can provide a means for private citizens and small organizations, groups previously discouraged by the cost, bureaucracy, and/or anonymity of long-distance philanthropy, to contribute.

How it works:

The Virtual Foundation is a consortium of environmental organizations in the U.S. and Eastern Europe, each of whom has extensive experience administering grants to NGOs. A regional representative organization debates the merits of grant proposals submitted by local non-profits— if accepted, proposals are then passed on to the Virtual Foundation's Board of Directors for further review. Following approval by the Board, the proposals, which range from \$1,000-\$5,000, are uploaded to the Internet where they can be viewed and by millions of people who then have the option to provide full- or partial funding.



(source: ccsi)

Visit the Virtual Foundation at:
 <http://www.virtualfoundation.org>

For more information, contact:
 Lydia Thompson or Randy Kritkauskay
 P.O. Box 142,
 Hartford PA 18823 USA
 Tel: (1-717) 434-9588 Fax: (1-717) 434-9589
 E-mail: ecologia@igc.apc.org

TREASURY TALK

The **Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE)** has added an economic reform discussion forum to their web page. The interactive forum, <http://www.cipe.org/discuss.html>, has been created to compliment CIPE's quarterly journal, *Economic Reform Today*, and contains excerpts from the magazine and reader feedback on new developments in economic reform, business development, and democratic institutions. To order *Economic Reform Today*, or to find out more about the Center and its activities, contact:

CIPE
 1615 H Street NW
 Washington, D.C. 20062-2000 USA
 Tel: (1-202) 463-5901 Fax: (1-202) 887-3447
 E-mail: cipe@cipe.org



N E W S

g r a n t s

SUPPORT FOR THIRD SECTOR RESEARCH

The **Aspen Institute's** Non-Profit Sector Research Fund seeks to expand understanding of non-profit activities, including philanthropy, by supporting research undertaken by scholars and practitioners. The institute offers awards ranging from \$5,000 - \$50,000 to support research of eligible applicants. Grants of up to \$20,000 are also available to support doctoral dissertation research. The application deadline is June 1.

For more information, contact:

Nonprofit Sector Research Fund, The Aspen Institute
1333 New Hampshire Ave., N.W. Suite 1070
Washington, DC 20036 USA
Tel: (1-202) 736-5838
Fax: (1-202) 467-0790
E-mail: nsrf@aspeninst.org
Web: <<http://www.aspeninst.org/dir/polpro/nsrf/nsrf1.html>>

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

The **Open Society Institute** has launched a grants program to accompany its new "Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative." Grants will be issued to strengthen the capacity of institutions and organizations engaged in reform-oriented activity, support analysis of issues and problems confronting local government, provide technical assistance to government agencies involved in reform, and assist national **Soros Foundations** in the development of local government initiatives. Letters of inquiry and proposals should be sent to:

Dr. Bohdan Krawchenko (LGPSRI)
Academy of Public Administration
Office of the President of Ukraine
20 Eugene Pottier Street, 252057 Kiev, Ukraine
Tel: (380-44) 446-0425
Fax: (380-44) 446-9436 or (380-44) 216-7629
E-mail: bk@ipa.freenet.kiev.ua

REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The Earmarked Grants Program, sponsored by the **Regional Environmental Center (REC)**, provides grants of up to 20,000 ECU for specific environmental projects which promote regional cooperation. The REC also sponsors a Local Grants Program which targets emerging NGOs in need of assistance. Through this program, grants of up to 5,000 ECU are made available to NGOs for operating expenses, training and educational activities, local projects, and local events.

For more information on the REC's grant programs, contact:

Regional Environmental Center
Ady Endre u. 9-11
Szentendre 2000, Hungary
Tel: (36-26) 311-199 Fax: (36-26) 311-294
E-mail: winston@rec.hu

ECONOMIC RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

The **Central and East European Economics Research Center (CEEERC)** in Warsaw is inviting applications for pre- and post-doctoral research fellowships from citizens of post-Communist countries. The center, co-sponsored by **Warsaw University** and **Columbia University**, will be conducting research on employment, social security, public health, financial institutions, regional integration, agricultural transformation, and other issues of importance to the region. Fellowships will be granted for periods of up to one year, and Fellows will be provided with housing, office space, and a monthly stipend. For more information or application procedures, contact:

Marian Wisniewski, Director CEEERC Warsaw University ul. Banacha 2B 02-097 Warsaw, Poland E-mail: lfherk@plearn.edu.pl	John Mcgiel, Director Institute on East Central Europe Columbia University New York, NY 10027 USA E-mail: jsm6@columbia.edu
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NFF REGIONAL THINK TANK INITIATIVE GRANT COMPETITION

The **National Forum Foundation** has announced the launch of the Regional Think Tank Initiative (RTTI). The program, initiated in March at the conference for CEE think tanks in Budapest, will strengthen CEE's independent public policy institutes in order to increase their ability to influence the public policy-making process. The program is specifically intended to strengthen regional ties and cooperation among CEE think tanks active in public policy development and implementation. A key component of this initiative will be financial support through the NFF's Regional Project Grants program.

GOALS

Through Regional Project Grants, as well as U.S.-based internships, regional exchanges, on-site managerial support, and the NGONet, the NFF plans to:

- Develop and strengthen networks of independent think tanks
- Enhance institutes' capacity to contribute to informed and effective public policy research, debate, and management;
- Strengthen programmatic linkages between CEE policy institutes;
- Facilitate management and organizational skills transfer between think tank staff, particularly between northern tier and southern tier institutes;
- Encourage "pilot" or model regional programs which can be duplicated at institutes elsewhere in CEE; and
- Increase institutes' financial viability.

ELIGIBILITY

To qualify for a grant under the RTTI, an applicant must be:

- A legally registered NGO in Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, or Slovakia; and
- Engaged in public policy research, development, and debate in the areas of democracy-building and economic development, preferably concerned with issues at the national level.

In addition, applicant proposals must have a clear public policy component and demonstrate a significant regional dimension and rationale.

POSSIBLE PROJECTS

The NFF's Regional Project Grants could be used for, but are not limited to, projects intended to:

- Produce and disseminate research studies, policy papers, or draft/model legislation;
- Formally establish or expand existing networks/associations;
- Provide training for staff from CEE institutes in areas such as fundraising, corporate relations, advocacy, public relations, and financial management;
- Strengthen institutes' capacities to educate the public and/or generate public awareness about critical issues; and
- Create or enhance opportunities for constructive interaction between policy-makers, the media, and think tanks.

Deadlines for receipt of proposals are
May 31, July 31, and September 30, 1997.

Send all inquiries to:

Regional Project Grants/TTI
National Forum Foundation - Budapest
18 Ménesi ut, 1118 Budapest, Hungary
Tel/Fax: (36-1) 185-0985, 185-3108, 166-9879
E-mail: nff@nff.hu

N E W S

r e g i o n

SEEKING EASTERN BUSINESSES AND WESTERN BUSINESSMEN

Citizens Democracy Corps (CDC), an initiative which sends senior-level executives and entrepreneurs to assist small and medium-sized companies and business support NGOs in the region, has expanded its program to include Ukraine and Moldova. The CDC is currently seeking Ukrainian and Moldovan NGOs and businesses which can benefit from the program, as well as volunteers willing to participate. Eligible for support are NGO business-support centers, business school development offices, regional and local economic agencies, trade bureaus, and privatization programs. Also eligible are privately owned businesses, or those in the process of privatization, which have been operating for at least one year. Representatives of interested companies and institutions, or individuals wishing to volunteer should contact:

Mr. Joe Mashkovich
Country Director, CDC Odessa
8a Marazlijevskaya Str.
Odessa 270004, Ukraine
Tel: (380-482) 251-425
Fax: (380-482) 250-128
E-mail: cdc@paco.net
Web: <<http://www.cdc.org>>

Ms. Bethany Weinstein
Program Officer, CDC Ukraine
Citizens Democracy Corps
1400 I Street NW, Suite 1125
Washington, D.C. 20005
Tel: (202) 872-0933
E-mail: bweinstein@cdc.org

TROUBLES IN BELARUS

The chilling backlash of Belarussian President Aleksandr Lukashenko's newly expanded powers has hit the country's fledgling civil society in a direct way. The **Soros Foundation-Belarus**, which has distributed \$13 million towards strengthening the third sector in Belarus, has become the latest victim of the government's increasing persecution against independent and opposition groups. On March 17th, Peter Bern, local director of the foundation, was detained for 12 hours at the Minsk airport, where he was accused of interfering in Belarussian affairs and then expelled from the country. The U.S. Embassy subsequently filed a protest, but in light of the current diplomatic situation between the two countries (relations have rapidly deteriorated following the U.S. government's decision to suspend \$40 million in aid for Belarus), it seems unlikely to have a major effect. According to *The New York Times*, Mr. Lukashenko has ordered an audit of the foundation and other non-governmental organizations.

HELP FOR HUNGARIAN NGOS

DemNet Hungary has begun a program to place student volunteers in Hungarian NGOs. These student interns—mainly foreigners studying in Hungarian universities—can provide non-profits with much needed office and translation help, at no cost to the organization. Interested NGOs should contact:

United Way International
Raoul Wallenberg u. 4, 1136 Budapest, Hungary
Tel/Fax: (36-1) 302-2939 or (36-1) 111-3811
E-mail: uwi@ind.eunet.hu

AWARDS FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL ANALYSIS

As part of an upcoming conference on "Entrepreneurship in the Transition Economies of Central and Eastern Europe," the **Institute for Foreign Studies** and the **Stern School of Business** at New York University have issued a call for papers. The organizers seek analyses of entrepreneurial activity as it relates to economic and political aspects of the transition. Authors of papers which are accepted for the conference, to be held in New York this November, will each be awarded a \$1,000 honorarium and travel expenses. For more information, contact:

Professor Paul Wachtel, Institute for East West Studies
700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 USA
Tel: (1-212) 998-0874 Fax: (1-212) 995-4218
E-mail: pwachtel@stern.nyu.edu

ECOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ESTONIA

A substantial development program, aimed to allow Estonia to meet the environmental and social goals set forth in the 1992 Rio de Janeiro environmental conference, has been launched in Estonia. On January 27th, the Estonian government and the Tallinn Branch of the **Stockholm Environmental Institute** signed an agreement to include Estonia among those countries with an environmental program modelled after Rio's Agenda 21 agreement.

SEEKING EXCHANGE ORGANIZERS

The **U.S. Department of Education** is seeking independent non-profit educational organizations in the U.S. to develop international education exchange activities between the U.S. and the countries of Eastern Europe, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia, the CIS, and any FSU countries whose political independence is recognized in the U.S. Programs should prioritize either the teaching of civics and government, or the teaching of economics, and should include a wide variety of seminars, exchanges and research. Applicants should have extensive experience in developing similar programs. For more information, contact:

Rita Foy, U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW Room 610
Washington, DC 20208-5573 USA
Tel: (1-202) 219-2079
Web: <<http://www.gcs.ed.gov>>

WANTED: SUCCESS STORIES

If you've got a public policy success story to tell, we'd like to hear from you. NGO News will award \$200 to the authors of success stories chosen for publication. All articles should clearly document how an NGO project or activity in the fields of democratization, economic development, social safety net restructuring, or environmental protection had a direct and significant impact on public policy. Articles should be between 400-500 words; submit them to NFF-Budapest (see address on back cover).

PUTTING VOLUNTEERS TO WORK

"Rebirth of Voluntarism in East-Central Europe," a conference to explore different aspects of voluntary work, will look at how NGOs can entice volunteers to their cause, how NGO organizers can best manage volunteers, and what role voluntarism plays in a civil society. The conference, organized by the United Way International and co-sponsored by the National Forum Foundation and the Non-Profit Financial Center, will be held in Szentendre, Hungary from June 20-22. Limited financial support is available for participants. For more information, contact:

Meeting Budapest, Ltd.
H-1027 Budapest, Csalogany u. 23-25, Hungary
Tel: (36-1) 212-1667 or (36-1) 201-2577 Fax: (36-1) 212-2623
E-mail: meeting@hungary.net

C A L E N D A R

April 25-May 3
Kiev, Ukraine
"Working Together for Equality." International training course for young leaders, organized by the Young Women from Minorities Network. Contact: WFM, c/o Mult. Centre, Vardshusvagen 46, S-14785 Tumba, Sweden; Tel: (46-8) 5306-2568; Fax: (46-8) 5306-2550

May 4-6
Bucharest, Romania
"Generating Investment Through Economic Reform" Conference sponsored by CIPE, ICES, and CPSCA Contact: CIPE, Eotvos u. 44, Budapest 1067, Hungary; Tel: (36-1) 269-5654; Fax: (36-1) 112-1470; E-mail: 100324.1674@compuserve.com

May 5-6
Bratislava, Slovakia
"Rural Development." Pan-European conference organized by the Council of Europe's Commission on Agriculture and Rural Development Contact: Council of Europe, Palais de Europe, F-67075, Strasbourg, France; Tel:(33-388) 412-113; Fax: (33-388) 412-719

May 9-11
Budapest, Hungary
"Regional Advocacy Training For NGOs Seminar" organized by the National Democratic Institute and the National Forum Foundation. Contact: Gina Vetere; NDI, 1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW, 5th Floor, Washington, DC 20036, USA; Tel: (1-202) 328-3136; Fax: (1-202) 939-3166; E-mail: 5979039@mcimail.com

May 12-14
Loughborough, United Kingdom
"Developing Democracy in Education," organized by the Institute for Democracy in Education, University of

Birmingham. Contact: Janet Meighan, Education Now, 113 Arundel Drive, Braincote Hills, GB-Nottingham NG9 3FQ; Tel/Fax: (44-115) 925-7261

May 12-13
Stockholm, Sweden
"Press and Parliaments-Transparency and Responsibility." Seminar organized by the Swedish Parliament. Contact: Centre Europeen de Recherche et de Documentation Parlementaires, European Parliament, L-2929 Luxembourg; Fax: (352-43) 009-021

May 14-15
Eger, Hungary
"Community Economic Development." Contact: Peter Nizak, Training Manager, United Way International, Raoul Wallenberg utca 4 II 1, 1136 Budapest, Hungary; Tel/Fax: (36-1) 111-3811

May 14-15
Eger, Hungary
"Public Debate of the Minority Law." Contact: Peter Nizak, Training Manager, United Way International, Raoul Wallenberg utca 4 II 1, 1136 Budapest, Hungary; Tel/Fax: (36-1) 111-3811

May 16-18
Skopje, Macedonia
"Regional Advocacy Training

For NGOs Seminar" organized by the National Democratic Institute and the National Forum Foundation. Contact: Gina Vetere; NDI, 1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW, 5th Floor, Washington, DC 20036, USA; Tel: (1-202) 328-3136; Fax: (1-202) 939-3166; E-mail: 5979039@mcimail.com

May 16-18
Bristol, UK
"Democratization in the Balkans." Contact: The Center for Mediterranean Studies, University of Bristol, 12 Priory Road, Bristol BS8 1TU UK; Tel: (44-117) 928-8827 or (44-117) 928-7898; Fax: (44-117) 973-2133

May 22-24
Split, Croatia
Second International Conference on Enterprises in Transition. Contact: Conference Organizing Committee, University of Split, Faculty of Economics, Radavanova 13, HR-21000 Split, Croatia; Tel: (385-21) 341-866 or (385-21) 362-465; Fax: (385-21) 366-026; E-mail: eitconf@oliver.efst.hr

May 22-24 (tentative)
Moldova
"Environment, NGOs and the Law: Advocacy and Empowerment." Environmental

conference identifying opportunities for Moldovan NGOs to become involved in the implementation and enforcement of major environmental laws and international environmental conventions. Contact: Neil Brennan, c/o Soros Foundation in Moldova; Fax: (373-422) 260-507; E-mail: neil@cinf.usm.md

June (date pending)
Tirana, Albania
"Central and Eastern Europe: Shared Experiences and Future NGO Partnerships." Hosted by the ORT Democracy Network Program. Contact: either your in-country DemNet office or ORT Intl., 2025 I . NW, Suite 320, Washington D.C. 20006, U.S.A.; Tel: (1-202) 293-2560; Fax: (1-202) 293-2577; E-mail: ortdc@aol.com

June 3-6
Bratislava, Slovakia
"Danube River Bonds" Bio-environment and Bio-culture conference. Contact: Andrea Gontkovicova, City University Bratislava, Mundronova 47, 811 03 Bratislava, Slovakia; Tel: (421-7) 531-4466; Fax: (421-7) 531-6978; E-mail: gontko@cub.sanet.sk

June 5-8
Braila, Romania
"The Danube Ecosystem and Conservation of Europe's

GETTING TIRED OF THAT BUSY SIGNAL? CHECK THE CODE
As of March 1, the country codes of the Czech Republic and Slovakia have been changed.
When dialing:
Use 420 for the Czech Republic
Use 421 for Slovakia

Grants and Awards made under the Democracy Network Program

Awarded by
NATIONAL FORUM FOUNDATION
AVID Program
American non-profit professionals volunteering at DemNet program offices and CEE NGOs.
Todd Blum, Civil Society Development Foundation, Warsaw, Poland. Mr. Blum assists CSDF-Poland in implementing a program on corporate philanthropy in Poland.
Pat Evans, U.S.-Baltic Foundation, Tallinn, Estonia. Ms. Evans delivers grant-writing and project development assistance to Estonian DemNet grantees.

Andrew Gee, United Way International, Budapest, Hungary. Mr. Gee is providing technical assistance to UWI as they compile a comprehensive database on Hungarian NGOs.
Patsy Goodman, Romanian Environmental Center (TER), Busteni, Romania. Ms. Goodman will assist TER with program development, strategic planning, and overall office management.

Edward Jakubauskas, U.S.-Baltic Foundation, Vilnius, Lithuania. Mr. Jakubauskas counsels Lithuanian DemNet grantees on various aspects of program development and implementation.

June Malina, Union of Bulgarian Foundations and Associations, Sofia, Bulgaria. Ms. Malina will assist UBFA in developing a lobbying strategy with Parliament and government.

Ashley Orton, United Way International, Budapest, Hungary. Ms. Orton assists UWI in

organizing and planning for a major regional conference on voluntarism in Central and Eastern Europe.

Angela Rosati, NIOK, Budapest, Hungary. Ms. Rosati provides fund-raising training and counsel to numerous Hungarian NGOs through different NIOK events.

Kathy Spillman, MOITETE, Prilep, Macedonia. Ms. Spillman is helping this Macedonian organization establish a volunteer program and implement a public relations and fundraising strategy.

Sureva Towler, U.S.-Baltic Foundation, Riga, Latvia. Ms. Towler delivers grant-writing and project development advice to Latvian DemNet grantees.

Caroleen Williams, Foundation for a Civil Society, Bratislava, Slovakia. Ms. Williams counsels Slovak DemNet grantees in communications and public relations techniques.

Joelle Ziemian, World Learning, Bucharest, Romania. Ms. Ziemian advises DemNet Romania grantees in project development, grant-writing, and public relations skills.

Regional Exchange Program
Professional exchanges for NGO staff from Central and Eastern Europe

Gabor Gerentser, Manager, and Atilla Eszik, System Administrator, Foundation for our Environment, Pecs, Hungary; spent one week with Kostitras in Presov, Slovakia.

Magdalena Votpkova (The Autistic Foundation, Prague, Czech Republic), Martina Bezplacova (Foundation Autism, Prague, Czech Republic), Antonin Petrsek (Association for the Assistance to Mentally

Handicapped, Stochov, Czech Republic), and Martin Polensky (EFFETA, Brno, Czech Republic) will participate in four one-week training sessions with the Central European Center for Autism in Budapest, Hungary.

Daniel Hliben, Volunteer Coordinator, and Dorel Sanauteanu, Project Coordinator, Active, Botosani, Romania; will spend two weeks with the Educators' Centers Association in Pecs, Hungary

U.S. Internship Program
Six-week U.S. internships for senior CEE NGO staff.

Doris Bogdani, Vice President for Academic Activities, European Law Student's Association, Tirana, Albania

Mirela Cekani, Board Member and Project Manager, Protection and Preservation of the Natural Environment of Albania (PPNEA), Tirana, Albania

Afroviti Gusko, Program Coordinator, Reflections Association, Pogradec Branch, Albania

Margarita Assenova, Director, Journalist for Tolerance Foundation, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Lilia Dimova, Director, Agency for Social Analyses, Sofia, Bulgaria

Emilia Lissichkova, Executive Director, Yanko Sakazov Foundation, Sofia, Bulgaria

Raya Staikova, Executive Director, Center for Research, Information and Social Economic Documentation (CRID), Sofia, Bulgaria

Renata Sartauskaite, Manager, NGO Information and Support Center, Vilnius, Lithuania

C A L E N D A R

Biodiversity." 5th international symposium. Contact: Prof. Dumitrica Albu, Fundatia Naturalista Al. Borza, Calea Calarasilor nr. 206, Braila 6100, Romania; Tel/Fax: (40-39) 675-668; E-mail: office@borza.sbnnet.ro

June 6-28
 Stadthlaining, Austria
 Mediation seminar. Contact: Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Rochuplatz 1/Burg, A-7461 Stadthlaining; Tel: (43-33) 552-498; Fax: (43-33) 552-662; E-mail: ipt@aspr.ac.at

June 7-14
 Strasbourg, France
 "Ethnic Conflict in the Wider Europe: Causes, Preventions, and Cures." Contact: 21 Century Trust, 10 Storey's Gate, London SW1P 3AY UK; Tel: (44-171) 222-8616; Fax: (44-171) 233-0835; E-mail: trust@tfct.demon.co.uk

June 12-14
 Laxenburg, Austria
 "Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change Research Community." This open meeting will bring together the growing human dimensions research community to promote information exchange, training and networking in the field. Contact: Claudia Heilig-Staindl, IIASA,

A-2361 Laxenburg, Austria; Tel: (43) 2236-807; Fax: (43) 2236-72659; E-mail: staindl@iiasa.ac.at

June 12-22
 WoudschotZeist, Holland
 "Fourth International Program on the Management of Sustainability," an intensive training program for senior officials from the non-profit, public, and private sectors. Emphasis on conflict-management and use of technical information in a policy setting. Contact: Sustainability Challenge Foundation, PO Box 1167,2502 AP, The Hague, Netherlands; Tel: (31-70) 339-4677; Fax: (31-70) 339-1308.

June 15-18
 Bonn, Germany
 "Conflict Management and Social Transformation." Conference of the International Association for Conflict Management (IACM). Contact: Berghof Research Center, Altensteinstr. 48a, D-14195 Berlin, Germany; Tel: (49-30) 831-90; Fax: (40-30) 831-5985

June 18-20
 Kosice, Slovakia
 "Democracy, Human Rights, and the Balance of Power Within the Judicial Arena," a conference organized in cooperation with the Constitutional Court of Slovakia. Contact: Europe 2000;

Tel: (31-40) 263-1212; Fax: (31-40) 283-5615

June 20-22
 Budapest-Szentendre, Hungary
 "Rebirth of Voluntarism in East-Central Europe." International Conference for NGOs (see page 15). Contact: Mrs. Maria Zam, United Way International, Raoul Wallenberg utca 4 II 1, 1136 Budapest, Hungary. Tel/Fax: (36-1) 111-3811. Application deadline: April 15.

June 26-29
 Vienna, Austria
 "Institutionalizing Horizontal Accountability: How Democracies Can Fight Corruption and the Abuse of Power." Conference. Contact: Debra Liang-Fenton, The International Forum for Democratic Studies, 1101 15th Street NW, Suite 802, Washington, DC 20005, USA; Tel: (1-202) 293-0300; Fax: (1-202) 293-0258; E-mail: debra@ned.org

June 26-29
 Helsinki, Finland
 "Promoting NGO Effectiveness: Managers and Trainers - Allies or Opponents?" A conference to explore different ways of working and training in the Third Sector. The conference will include study visits to NGOs in Helsinki and is

open to NGO trainers, general managers, funders, and researchers. Contact: Finnish Federation of Social Welfare; Tel: (358-9) 774-721 or (358-9) 7747-2201; Fax: (358-9) 738-123; E-mail: SosiaaliturvanKL@stkl.fi

September 8-20
 Chambéry, France
 "Multidisciplinarity and International Cooperation in Environmental Education." Conference. Contact: Dr. Herve Boileau, AUDES '97, ASIGEC, Université de Savoie, Campus Technolac, 73376 Le Bourget du Lac, France. Tel: (33) 7975-8812; Fax: (33) 7975-8772; E-mail: boileau@univ-savoie.fr

September 23-26
 Budapest, Hungary
 "The Second World Assembly of CIVICUS- World Alliance for Citizen Participation." The event will focus on increasing the visibility and understanding of civil society, advocating the freedom of association, and enhancing the resource base of civil society organizations. Contact: CIVICUS, 919 18th Street, NW, 3rd Floor, Washington, DC 20006, U.S.A.; Tel: (1-202) 331-8518; Fax: (1-202) 331-8774

September 28 - October 11
 Stadthlaining, Austria
 "Human Rights Protection" seminar. Contact Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Rochuplatz 1/Burg, A-7461 Stadthlaining; Tel: (43-33) 552-498; Fax: (43-33) 552-662; E-mail: ipt@aspr.ac.at

November 10-16
 Budapest, Hungary
 "The Role of Youth in the Governance of Non-Profit Organizations." Contact: European Foundation for Intercultural Learning, Rue des Colonies, Koloniestraat 18-24, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium; Tel: (32-2) 514-5250; Fax (32-2) 514-2929; E-mail: info@efil.be; Web: <http://www.afs.org/efil>

This calendar is compiled from a variety of sources and publications, including the excellent "Information Bulletin" published by the International Institute for Democracy. To include an upcoming event or conference in NGONews, please send a brief description, along with dates and contact information, to:

NGO News
 National Forum Foundation
 18 Menesi ut
 1118 Budapest, Hungary

Grants and Awards made under the Democracy Network Program

Tomitza Anchevski, MD, Secretary General, Ecological Association "Lipa", Kumanovo, Macedonia

Sreten Koceski, Committee Member, Ecologist Movement of Tetovo, Macedonia
 Mario Veljkovic, President, Ecological Association "Vino Zhito"(Rainbow), Stip, Slovakia

Samuel Pacenovsky, Project Coordinator, Sosna Foundation, Kosice, Slovakia

Eva Papayova, Program Coordinator, Sandor Marai Foundation, Bratislava, Slovakia

Regional Project Grants

Financial awards supporting cross-border activities and regional projects involving two or more DemNet countries.

For the Earth Bulgaria: \$3,000 for costs related to the publication and distribution of the East Europe Clean Air Handbook.

Awarded by
**U.S.-BALTIc FOUNDATION
 (LITHUANIA)**

Association of Suvalkieciai "Suvalkija" (Marijampole): \$2,500 to support an international conference and propose legislation related to inhabitants of Lithuania who were forcibly transferred from the Soviet Union to Lithuanian territory after June 1940.

Baltic Social Economy Center (Vilnius): \$15,600 to train apartment and property owners making the transition to cooperative and ownership status, and also to encourage homeowners to join housing cooperatives.

Charity Fund at Panevezys Youth Community Center (Panevezys): \$10,000 to support the creation of a "Youth Career Center," including part-time and volunteer staff, a database of regional employers, workshops and seminars, and coordination between municipalities and youth organizations.

Children Charity Fund "Sirvinta" (Sirvintos): \$1,500 to establish a day care center in Ciobiskis for at-risk children. Support will also include a community assistance and integration plan.

Environmental Club "Zvejone" (Klaipeda): \$8,900 to establish a Public Environmental Center. "Zvejone" will promote public participation in environmental policy-making in the Klaipeda region.

Lithuanian College of Democracy (Vilnius): \$4,400 to support a three-day conference for Lithuanian educators on the roles of and contributions made by international organizations in Lithuania.

Lithuanian Environmental Society of Coastal Region (Silute district): \$2,950 to bring attention to problems of the natural environment through seminars and a lecture series, followed by an exhibition on Lithuanian environmental activities.

Lithuanian Missing Persons Families Support Center (Vilnius): \$12,500. Through existing media and advocacy campaigns, the organization will propose and monitor legislation regarding the unlawful abduction of Lithuanian citizens.

Non-governmental Organization Information and Support Center (Vilnius): \$10,000 to support the fourth Lithuanian NGO Forum &

Information Fair, bringing together representatives of Lithuanian NGOs, local governments and the media.

Social Innovation Fund (Kaunas): \$17,000 to allow the Fund to set up a computer lab, and organize seminars between local governments, the media and women's organizations to create awareness of and influence policy in the women's employment issues.

Spiritual Guidance Center for Youth Foundation (Klaipeda): \$11,000 to strengthen its existing outreach and educational activities. The Foundation will establish a Youth Crisis Telephone Hotline, a voluntary and anonymous service for youth in the Klaipeda region.

Youth Society "Selos Ramuva" (Rokiskis district): \$5,700 for a three-stage beautification plan for the town of Obeliai, involving town officials, municipal landscape architects, a system of community review, and volunteer laborers.

Awarded by
**ORT INTERNATIONAL
 (ALBANIA)**

Assistance Center for Business Associations: \$12,560 to establish a support and networking center to strengthen and support institutional development, networking, and public policy activities of business associations in Korca.

National Union of Albanian Farmers: \$15,000 for institutional capacity building and advocacy. The grant will fund travel costs for 20 leaders to congregate in Tirana for training and policy advocacy.

Women's Center: \$14,490 to effect public continued on p.22

DemNet Country Program Briefs

Albania

Organization for Educational Resources and Technological Training (ORT)

The ORT DemNet program directly sponsors inter-NGO cooperation and networking. Specifically, ORT DemNet funds NGO service and networking centers including the **Albanian NGO Forum**, the **Women's Center**, the **Albanian Youth Council**, the **Health for All Foundation**, and the **Assistance Center for Business Associations**. These NGOs provide access to office facilities and technical advice to their members and the general NGO community. The centers have been instrumental in organizing NGO coalitions to address important policy issues, such as increasing the number of women candidates in parliamentary elections, petitioning journalists and the press for objective and professional standards, distributing public health information, formulating a legal framework favorable to NGOs, and developing local business. Moreover, the goal of building NGO coalitions and alliances is a key objective guiding

ORT DemNet training, technical assistance and grant awards. National conferences entitled, "Building NGO-Government Partnerships" as well as policy advocacy training are organized on a sector basis. This structure brings together groups which are addressing similar issues and fosters communication and cooperation within the sector. ORT DemNet grant criteria specifically favors those Albanian NGOs which show a track record of NGO collaboration and incorporate it into their proposed projects. Recently, ORT awarded DemNet funds to an Assistance Center for Business Associations, which is a new partnership between two important business associations in Korca, Albania - the **Women's Business Association** and the **Beverage Producer's Association**. The DemNet funds will support institutional development, networking, and public policy activities of business associations in Korca. To facilitate regional cooperation, ORT DemNet, together with the National Forum Foundation, funds one of the first regional collaborations among Greek,

Macedonian and Albanian NGOs on a joint environmental protection project for the shared Prespa Lakes.

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HOW HAS ALBANIA'S NGO SECTOR
RESPONDED TO THE RECENT TURMOIL?

SEE PAGE 11 FOR A FULL REPORT

The Baltic States

U.S. - Baltic Foundation (USBF)

Managed by the U.S.- Baltic Foundation, the DemNet program in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is now in its second year of activities. Through the subgrants and training components of the program, USBF is beginning to target a smaller number of NGOs as capable of continuing the successes of DemNet cooperation when the program ends in 1998. The three Baltic countries offer natural examples of NGOs with cross-border activities:

- **The Estonian Green Movement (ERL)** received a DemNet subgrant for a "Baltic Timber Trade" project, to analyze government forestry development strategies in the Baltic region. By investigating consumer campaigns in the Baltics and Scandinavia, the ERL is monitoring current activities in environmental protection and working with similar NGOs throughout the region. The result of this analysis will be a research study provided to governments in the region.

- With its subgrant, the **European Union for Coastal Conservation (Lithuania)** is working with local municipalities along the Lithuanian and Latvian Baltic Sea coasts to address ecological challenges common to both countries. By assisting local governments in forming partnerships with environmental NGOs, the Union is beginning a grassroots campaign to include coastal cities and towns from Liepaja, Latvia, to Nida, Lithuania.

- In November 1996, the **Jaan Tonisson Institute** in Tallinn organized a Baltic Funders' Forum to meet the need for cooperation among international and local grant-makers in the region. Because many funders, including the U.S. government, frequently consider the three Baltic countries to have similar development needs, the institute began what is hoped will be a continuing dialogue among regional donors. In fact, with representatives from the three Baltic countries, as well as the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, Ukraine, and Scandinavia, the conference was the first time these organizations collectively discussed a development strategy for the region.

- USBF provided funding for the publication and translation of a handbook, "Writing Winning Grant Proposals," into Latvian, Russian, Estonian, and Lithuanian. Originally written by **Peace Corps** volunteers, the handbook is an example of one of the many partnerships being made by American specialists and Baltic NGOs.

The third round of DemNet subgrants is underway: in Estonia and Latvia, more than 180 proposals have been evaluated by the USBF offices and forwarded to the Advisory Panels; in Lithuania, the Advisory Panels and Democracy Commissions selected Round III subgrant recipients in January. With the training and subgrant programs producing results that can be used as models by organizations across the region, the DemNet program is cultivating a cadre of NGOs with experience in managing programs that affect public policy. To this end, USBF will be increasing the use of the media in locally publicizing NGO activities and relations between NGOs and local governments.

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—COMING SOON— NFF THINK-TANK DIRECTORY

A comprehensive look at think-tanks in the region

To reserve your copy, complete this form and return it to:

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Ménesi ut 18
1118 Budapest, Hungary

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Bulgaria

Institute for Sustainable Communities

Before the Democracy Network Program began operations in Bulgaria, NGOs had little tradition or incentive to work together. While this situation has not changed entirely, the DemNet Program has been one of the important institutional stimulants to inter-NGO cooperation, along with groups like the **Union of Bulgarian Foundations and Associations**. Our strategy from the beginning was to facilitate an environment in which DemNet grantees are made to feel part of a special network.

An example of this is ISC's training program, which currently provides services to over 80 organizations— both grant recipients and promising invitees. The program is structured so that NGOs can spend substantial formal and informal time working together and learning about one another. Depending on the theme of the training, NGOs with similar missions are encouraged to work in small groups together, so that problems which are common to a set of NGOs can be discussed, and experiences shared. This networking approach has led to several examples of NGOs working together on common initiatives. Most of these same NGOs were unfamiliar with their new partners before DemNet began its activities.

Besides training events, ISC also schedules a project review conference for every grant round. Grantees with current projects have the chance to present their successes and problems to a wide audience, which includes all of the NGOs in the network; NGOs outside of the network that are working on similar projects; media; mayors from municipalities where the projects are taking place; and other donor representatives. After progress reports are given, participants break up into smaller groups with topical themes (such as working with local governments, working to improve the situation for minorities, social safety net, etc.) in order to exchange views and contact information.

ISC's newest initiative, to be promoted in its upcoming grant round, is the creation of the category "Partnership Grants," to be given to two or more NGOs working on the same project. The NGOs may have similar or different missions, target beneficiary groups, and/or geographic bases. By supporting NGOs working on project proposals together and (if funded) carrying out project activities in tandem, ISC hopes to further increase the number of organizations cooperating with one another. NGOs which propose joint projects with non-NGO formal partners, such as local governments, private sector groups and media, will also be eligible for this grant category.

Finally, promoting information sharing through publications and written materials is another way ISC tries to assist NGO cooperation. In addition to providing organizations with e-mail connections and publishing a newsletter (to which NGOs are encouraged to make submissions) the program urges NGOs to bring their own materials to events in order to share information with one another.

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Czech Republic

Foundation for a Civil Society (FCS)

Rather than designing specific projects to address the issue of networking, the Democracy Network Program in the Czech Republic considers the issue to be implied by the programmatic mandate, and thus strongly encourages such cooperation through all of its activities. Throughout the program's grant-making process, NGOs that have demonstrated close working relationships with other organizations within the sector— and with organizations or institutions in other sectors— have been considered much stronger prospects to receive grant funds that those which operate independently.

In the two years of the program's operations, as individuals and organizations have come to realize its value, the staff has seen a natural increase in networking and cooperation within the sector. DemNet staff has encouraged this trend through hundreds of staff consultations, a process which has resulted in a higher number of projects which include a networking component. Later grant rounds, for example, have shown an increase in requests for funding grassroots "umbrella" organizations to play an information-sharing, consulting and coordinating role in NGO communities. DemNet funded three such centers in the region.

Some examples of the networking being done by three of DemNet-CR's 142 grantees:

- The **Child and Horse Foundation** in Kutna Hora, Central Bohemia was asked by other local NGOs and the town's mayor to assume the responsibility of coordinating the region's third sector activity. This NGO center, founded with DemNet funds, has already organized a local NGO fair, and is compiling a directory of active NGOs in the area.
- DemNet funds enabled the **Our Child Foundation** to organize a state-wide seminar entitled "We Are Working Together." The seminar gathered over 100 professionals from institutions across the Republic which deal with children in crisis: social workers, school employees, health care workers, NGOs, the police, and people working on child protection in the legal field. The conference represented the first attempt to introduce a model of cooperation among all participants in this field, allowing them to share experiences and to create a framework for cooperation.
- **Ekocentrum Paleta** (formerly **Task Klub**) in Pardubice has developed highly professional interactive tools for environmental education in elementary schools, and is contracted by the local government to run public information campaigns to educate citizens about recycling and the city's waste management goals. Its close cooperation with City Hall has helped lead to the creation of a local fund for environmental education within the city budget. This organization was recently instrumental recently in initiating the **Spiderweb project**: a national network of top environmental education NGOs, all of whom contribute funds to support a single representative, the Director of Ekocentrum Paleta, who is responsible for advocating their interests in parliament and at various ministries.

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NETWORKING



NETWORKING



Hungary

United Way International (UWI)

Through cooperation between local governments and NGOs based in regions throughout the country, **United Way International's** DemNet Hungary is working to improve networking skills and collaboration among small indigenous organizations.

"Local Government in Partnership with Civil Society" is a current DemNet program which facilitates communication between the civil and government sectors. This is a vital step in establishing the conditions for active NGO representation in the policy-making process of local governments. It also creates an environment that encourages shared responsibility in the field of public service, which in turn lays the groundwork for NGO competition in government contracting and participation in government-sponsored community projects.

In the city of Pecs, DemNet Hungary succeeded in signing an agreement with the local government which has initiated an alliance between Pecs' city government, the **Educators Association**, and DemNet. This agreement will soon result in the establishment of a **House of Civil Communities** and a **Civil Round Table**. DemNet Hungary will provide training and fiscal support for the Civil House, which will serve as an advisor to the local government, teaching effective means of working with NGOs and making use of their services. The Civil House will also provide support to NGOs through technical assistance and professional consultation regarding government policies.

The round table will act as a regular forum for discussion between the two sectors. Using the Civil House as a model, DemNet hopes to create a network of similar "incubator houses" in different Hungarian regions.

DemNet Hungary's program objectives focus not only upon direct cooperation between local government and NGOs, but also upon training in organizational coalition-building skills. Advocacy training by foreign professionals offers local NGO, minority and government representatives the opportunity to increase their skills in networking, lobbying, and cooperative techniques for developing group tactics.

By stimulating regional collaboration, NGOs will strengthen their common civic voice in the political arena, and government officials will develop a broader understanding of the sector's demands. Consequently, acting collectively to a more receptive audience, NGOs will play a greater role in exercising influence upon the drafting of new laws and government policy, both at the local and national levels.

DemNet Hungary looks forward to creating a tradition of inter-NGO dialogue and resource exchange. Cooperation and collaboration are vital tools, both to expand the NGO sector's credibility and its impact on governing, and to help grassroots organizations face upcoming challenges.

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Macedonia

Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC)

Encouraging cooperation and networking among non-governmental organizations is one of the highest priorities of DemNet Macedonia— and one of its greatest challenges. Due to competition for scarce resources and a host of other social, economic, and cultural factors, Macedonian NGOs often display a tendency toward competition for resources and recognition rather than collaboration. On the other hand, Macedonia's small size is conducive to NGO networking, and some NGO networks do exist. For example, the **Ecologists' Movement of Macedonia** is an umbrella organization of about 25 geographically based environmental NGOs throughout Macedonia, whose mission is to facilitate communication and cooperation among member organizations and others.

The Democracy Network Program in Macedonia seeks to strengthen and improve these existing networks— and build new ones— in a number of ways:

The guidelines and criteria for DemNet's grants program encourage more networking among Macedonian NGOs. In fact, one of the three categories of eligible grant activities for DemNet Macedonia is "networking and information-sharing." In the first three grant rounds, about 20% of the 46 grants were awarded for these types of projects. In addition, ISC allowed a special exception to its annual funding limit (\$10,000 per NGO per year) for projects that bring 10 or more NGOs together for networking purposes. Several of its grant projects are helping to bring Macedonian NGOs closer together. An example of this was a grant awarded to the Ecologists' Movement of Macedonia (a two-year grant, and one of the largest to date) to establish an **Environmental Information and Documentation Center** which will establish and train a network of NGO members from throughout the country in environmental data-gathering. DemNet Macedonia also awarded a grant to an NGO in a small city in the northeastern part of the country— the **Ecological Association "Breza"**— to establish an NGO association encompassing the 5-6 individual NGOs in the city.

Their training program encourages networking and cooperation in both direct and indirect ways. Indirectly, the program's frequent training workshops provide regular opportunities for NGOs to be at the same place at the same time, to share experiences, ideas, and information, and to discuss possible collaboration. More directly, many of ISC's workshops provide training on team-building, effective communication, and coalition building.

They publish and widely distribute a quarterly NGO newsletter, entitled "People Power." The newsletter functions as an important forum for exchanging ideas, information, and experiences.

Finally, the program helps to facilitate the participation of Macedonian NGO members in regional and international NGO conferences, where they have opportunities to network with their counterparts in other countries.

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Poland

Academy for Educational Development (AED)

NGOs in Poland tend to be isolated. They seldom work together to pool resources and share information with other NGOs, the public, or private sector. AED has adopted a broad approach to promote networking and inter-NGO cooperation on three levels: local, national and regional. The aim is to channel inter-NGO cooperation into alliances for building greater transparency of funding on the local level and to create regional and national linkages, thus increasing sustainability for the entire NGO sector.

Local networking efforts have focused on activities advocating the development of transparent NGO funding procedures on the municipal level. DemNet subgrantees and a network of NGO technical assistance providers are currently involved in the development of a nation-wide local government/NGO cooperation framework. Forty proposals have been submitted in the first local grant competition, and sector meetings with local NGO representatives are currently being held to establish future funding priorities. Spearheading the development of local government/NGO cooperation in six cities is one of the central goals of the final phase of the DemNet project in Poland.

Efforts to develop regional and national linkages have been pioneered by the **Forum of NGO Initiatives**, a DemNet grantee established to promote integration of the Polish NGO sector. Building on experience gathered in 18 provincial and regional NGO congresses, and supported by a nationwide network of provincial NGO coordinators, the Forum organized the first national NGO congress, which was attended by representatives of over 1,000 NGOs. The Forum's efforts have resulted in permanent mechanisms of inter-NGO cooperation that will endure in future local, provincial, regional and national NGO congresses.

DemNet has also been instrumental in initiating partnerships between a number of international and local NGOs to create viable models for community foundations in Poland. Cooperation between representatives of the **National Forum Foundation**, the **European Foundation Center**, **BORIS NGO Support Office**, the **UNDP Umbrella Project**, the **Stefan Batory Foundation**, the **Mott Foundation**, the **Ford Foundation** and AED has resulted in the scheduling of two conferences (March 12 and April 24-26) aimed to stimulate networking and prepare the groundwork for the establishment of community foundations in Poland.

DemNet Poland will continue to provide essential assistance for further development of the country's third sector. They will do this by supporting and advocating inter-NGO cooperation and networking on local, national, and regional levels, and by emphasizing the need to create durable independent community-based funding institutions.

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Romania

World Learning

Through the Democracy Network Program, Romanian NGOs with policy concerns receive training and technical assistance in the development of comprehensive policy-oriented projects which address concerns relating to the environment, social services, democracy and human rights, and economic restructuring.

In formulating the blueprint for the advocacy aspects of their projects, NGOs are encouraged to consider the broad value and benefit of including an inter-organizational outreach and coalition building component. The costs of establishing and managing the activities of the coalition may be included in the budget of their project proposals.

By reaching out to like-minded organizations with similar policy concerns, an NGO is able to broaden its resource base, acquire complementary strengths and draw on additional creativity. This leads to a greater efficiency and a greater capacity to successfully achieve policy goals.

With these benefits in mind, many of the NGOs working with DemNet Romania have included coalition building in their projects. The **Romanian Energy Policy Association** is leading the formation of a coalition of international energy groups, Romanian environmental NGOs, and manufacturing/economic interests in their efforts to pass energy efficiency legislation. All members of the coalition have defined roles in the campaign: sharing information, conducting research, developing strategies and approaches and lobbying parliament.

The **Group for Speological and Underwater Exploration (GESS)** is leading a coalition of 15 environmental NGOs towards an amendment of the Romanian Water Protection Act, which will equate the severity of potential fines with the severity of potential prison terms for violators of the law. The coalition members will share responsibility with GESS for conducting research on the quality of water in Romania and on providing international legislative examples, publishing a campaign newsletter on water issues, overseeing passage of the revised legislation, and undertaking an extensive media campaign involving two national television networks, two national radio networks and ten newspapers.

Policy-oriented coalitions, dedicated to the achievement of specific policy goals, begin as transitory, temporal entities which are often disbanded at the end of a policy-advocacy campaign. But it is possible for the organizational behaviors adopted to lead to the creation of permanent, issue-oriented coalitions with the establishment of policy-oriented umbrella organizations. These institutions can then represent coalition members in the political arena and form the basis of a continuing policy dialogue with public authorities in the common interest of members and their beneficiaries.

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DemNet
Country
Program
Briefs

DemNet Country Program Briefs

Slovakia

Foundation for a Civil Society (FCS)

The **Foundation for a Civil Society's** Democracy Network staff, assisted by a representative from the **National Forum Foundation's AVID** program, recently initiated weekly lunchtime seminars on topics of interest to current grantees. The first seminar topic, "Mental Health Services and Current Legislative Initiatives," provided an opportunity for DemNet's mental health program directors to exchange ideas and report on Parliament's most recent activities affecting mental health services. Reporters known to write articles on the subject were invited to participate in the discussion; one article about the seminar was published the next day in a widely-read publication. At least ten additional seminars for program directors and reporters have been scheduled to take place in upcoming weeks on the topics of "Building a Civil Society in Slovakia," "Confronting Drug Addiction," "The Position of Independent Broadcasters in Slovakia" "Environmental Protection," "Problems Facing Slovakia's Children," and "The Status of the Romany Minority."

In late April, most of DemNet's grantees will attend one of three scheduled media/public relations workshops developed with assistance from a PR/media consultant with the AVID program.

A public relations booklet, authored and published in both English and Slovak, will be used at the workshops, scheduled for April 24-26. The Slovak DemNet program directors who are most successful in affecting public policy in their areas of expertise will describe their media relations strategies for the benefit of other DemNet grantees. At the conclusion of the workshops, each director will prepare a year-long PR plan for their organization.

DemNet staff is in the process of reorganizing itself to emphasize case management techniques and cross-disciplinary training so that it can better respond to current grantees' needs before the ends of the program next spring. NGOs who are making a difference in their communities deserve a chance to continue their efforts beyond DemNet, and it is to that end that the Slovak office will be dedicated in the months ahead.

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Grants and Awards made under the Democracy Network Program (cont'd from page 17)

ALBANIA, cont'd

policies related to women through dissemination of information on gender issues.

DeMeTra: \$5,000 to develop and test a training module on NGO communication skills (to improve communication internally, and with the media, government, and the public).

Albanian Youth Council: \$4,760 for the national symposium entitled "Youth Policy in Development," to engage the government in a dialogue about youth issues and work in partnership to formulate policy solutions.

Albanian NGO Forum: \$5,000 for a project of NGO Networking and Capacity Building Through Improved Information Dissemination, which funds continued production and publication of a monthly bulletin, three general membership meetings, and translation of materials and texts focused on issues of capacity building of NGOs.

Albanian Hemophilic Association: \$3,765 for a research and advocacy campaign to document the state of treatment of people with hemophilia and advocate reform.

Albanian Ecologic Club - Lezha: \$1,759 to undergo a campaign to re-establish nature reserves in Vain and Kune.

Association to Assist Mentally Handicapped People - Pogradec: \$1,540 for improvement in and enforcement of the Law on Social Assistance for Mentally Handicapped Persons and Caretakers.

Awarded by
**INSTITUTE FOR
SUSTAINABLE
COMMUNITIES
(BULGARIA)**

The United Roma Union (Sliven):

\$7,605 to strengthen NGO's capacity and social safety net activities.

The Association for Development of Lucky Municipality (Lucky): \$3,055 to strengthen NGO's capacity and work in the area of local government transparency.

Sofia Association for Mental Health: \$4,900 for establishing and testing self-help models for patient treatment.

Bulgarian Association for Fair Elections and Civil Rights (Lovech): \$2,202 to strengthen NGO's capacity and work in the area of local government transparency.

Partnership Foundation (Sofia): \$2,850 to assist "Community Dialog Group" in Sliven become sustainable.

Roma Regional Development Foundation (Plovdiv): \$9,500 to improve local safety net and economic conditions through establishing citizens councils for municipal land distribution to landless Roma.

Free and Democratic Bulgaria Foundation (Sofia): \$7,500 for establishing of information network on "stray" children and facilitating partnerships between service providers and governmental authorities.

Legal Initiative for Training and Development (Varna): \$8,660 to improve rule of law through increasing legal competence of citizen jurors.

Opportunity and Protection Foundation(Haskovo): to strengthen NGO's capacity and its ability to provide services to disadvantaged youth.

Solaris-3 Foundation (Sofia): \$8,715 to improve local safety net and economic conditions by reducing unemployment among Roma people in Lom.

Bulgarian Association for Fair Elections and Civil Rights (Levski): \$4,370 to strengthen NGO's capacity and work in the area of local government transparency.

Bulgarian Association for Fair Elections and Civil Rights (Veliko Turnovo): \$12,490 for increasing local government transparency in partnership with local media.

Bulgarian Association for Fair Elections and Civil Rights (Razgrad): \$7,350 for increasing local government transparency through a variety of mechanisms, including public meetings, petitions, etc.

Association for Dissemination of Citizen's Knowledge (Sofia): \$9,000 for institutional strengthening for an NGO working in the area of democracy building.

Journalists for Tolerance Foundation (Plovdiv): \$5,150 for institutional strengthening for an NGO working in the area of ethnic and religious tolerance.

The Blue Stones Foundation (Sliven): \$8,264 to improve local safety net and economic conditions through establishing mechanisms to distribute land to disadvantaged Bulgarians.

Center for NGOs Development (Pleven): \$6,095 to increase local government transparency through initiatives connected to establishment of a Citizens' Committee.

Women's Roma Association (Plovdiv): \$5,100 to strengthen NGO's capacity and ability to provide services to Plovdiv Roma community, particularly to women and children.

New Life for the Bulgarian Roma Foundation (Sliven): \$7,200 for human rights monitoring, advocacy and educational activities.

Bulgarian Society for Education and Culture (Stara Zagora): \$8,670 to improve municipal structures and procedures for local citizen participation throughout Bulgaria.

Center for Independent Living (Sofia): \$8,540 to strengthen NGO's capacity and ability to serve handicapped citizens.

Bi-Bit Club for Road Safety (Sofia): \$4,585 to create citizens

structures and partnerships with local officials for increased road safety conditions.

Youth Center: Education for Democracy (Plovdiv): \$7,755 for establishing model local school boards.

No To Fear Movement (Sofia): \$10,835 for citizen empowerment focused on reducing official and unofficial corruption and improving enforcement of existing laws.

Animus Association (Sofia): \$5,995 for improving social safety nets standards and practices throughout Bulgaria, particularly for women.

Perspective Foundation (Sofia): \$7,480 for social rights advocacy, enforcement and improvements.

Meeting Foundation (Sofia): \$7,030 for social rights advocacy, enforcement and improvements.

Roma Union for Social Democracy (Vidin): \$3,220 for establishing partnerships with the local government, businesses and other societal groups to solve local problems.

Bulgarian Association for School and Health (Sofia): \$7,885 for establishing structures for educational policy decision making decentralization.

Social Development Club (Dobrich): \$5,500 to strengthen NGO's capacity and ability to carry out social safety net activities in Dobrich.

Center for Development (Perushitza): \$2,450 to strengthen NGO's capacity and work in the area of local government transparency.

Association of Practitioners in Education and Social Sphere (Sofia): \$15,150 for stimulating and structuring volunteer efforts nationwide.

Youth Initiative Center (Rouse): \$8,900 to introduce self-help models geared towards reducing the local unemployment rate among women.

REGIONAL NETWORKING PROGRAM

National Forum Foundation (NFF)

The **National Forum Foundation's** role within the Democracy Network Program is to promote and strengthen cross-border cooperation among the region's indigenous public-policy oriented NGOs. The effort includes a range of training, publishing, information sharing, and networking activities, as outlined below:

Regional exchanges allow NGO staff-members in CEE to spend one to six weeks in a counterpart NGOs in any DemNet country. The program provides NGOs the opportunity to develop professional relationships, transfer skills, and build projects. For example, Honza Jirousek from **ECONNECT** in Prague spent two weeks with the **Green Spider Network** (an e-mail network serving Hungarian environmental organizations) in Vac, Hungary. Mr. Jirousek helped install Green Spider's internet server and trained the staff of Green Spider to use it. The relationship developed during the exchange led to the two organizations co-sponsoring a regional conference on Internet-NGO issues in CEE.

U.S.-based internships place senior staff members from CEE NGOs in counterpart organizations in the United States for six weeks of training, networking, and program development.

Regional Project Grants are awarded to public-policy-oriented NGOs in at least two, but preferably three or more, countries in CEE. In 1996, for example, the NFF supported the initial meeting in Brno, Czech Republic, of a newly formed regional network of NGOs assisting refugees, the **Central European Forum on Refugee Assistance**.

Regional workshops and seminars are sponsored by the NFF to contribute to the institutional development of public policy-oriented NGOs in CEE and to increase the cooperation between these organizations. Last May 23-26, for example, the NFF, in cooperation with the **Hudson Institute** and the **New Atlantic Initiative**, brought together 50 of the region's leading think tank leaders, journalists, and political figures to Budapest for a conference on "Linking Ideas and Research with Public Policy: the Challenge for the Think Tank Community." In conjunction with the **National Democratic Institute**, the NFF will sponsor advocacy training workshops for CEE NGOs in Budapest and Skopje.

NFF publications serve as information resources to facilitate cooperation within the CEE NGO community. The foundation publishes the newsletter you are reading. The NFF also published in 1996 the *Directory of NGO Trainers for Central and Eastern Europe*, which provides a detailed listing of CEE's NGO trainers and their particular fields of expertise. Later this year, the NFF will publish and distribute *Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe: A Comprehensive Directory*. The directory will provide detailed information on over 120 policy institutes from CEE and will be the first such publication in its field.

Over the next year of the DemNet project, the NFF will place special emphasis on supporting networking activities between public policy research and education institutes ("think tanks") operating in the fields of democratization and economic development.

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REGIONAL LEGAL PROGRAM

International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)

ICNL supports cooperation among NGOs, governments and legal communities in a variety of ways. Building sustainable in-country, sub-regional, regional, and international networks of people and organizations interested in NGO legal issues is an underlying objective of ICNL's technical assistance and training activities.

At the in-country level, ICNL has assisted in the formation of national working groups to address issues concerning NGO legislation. These working groups' members are often comprised of representatives from the NGO sector, government ministries, parliaments and legal communities. Thus, the working groups not only promote collaboration between NGOs, but also foster NGO cooperation with governments and lawyers. ICNL also promotes the development of networks through training activities. In the Baltic States, for example, ICNL and the **National Democratic Institute (NDI)** recently presented a series of seminars on building coalitions to advocate for changes to NGO laws.

Regarding networks at the subregional, regional, and international levels, ICNL has held three regional conferences on NGO law (co-funded by the **Open Society Institute/Soros Foundation Network** and organized by local partners). ICNL also supports the exchange of research and information at these levels. Last year, ICNL formed task forces comprised of experts from Western Europe, North America and the CEE region to prepare research papers on three topics: 1) public advocacy by NGOs; 2) NGO economic activities; and 3) the concept of "public benefit" status. ICNL assembled an even broader group of experts who were recently involved in the drafting of a handbook on NGO law. That project was funded by the **Open Society Institute** which will publish the handbook later this year.

ICNL has always strived to involve individuals from the CEE region as trainers and providers of technical assistance. Within the Democracy Network program, Czech and Polish legal experts have worked with ICNL in Albania. More recently, a Slovak trainer participated in the NDI/ICNL coalition building seminars in Latvia and Estonia. A Czech expert has also served as a trainer in a recent ICNL program in the Ukraine, as part of a project funded by the **Charles Stewart Mott Foundation**. Similarly, a Polish expert on associations has been leading ICNL/**World Bank** projects in Central Asia.

In the near future, ICNL will undertake additional activities to support cooperation and strengthen NGO networks. A series of sub-regional seminars on legal subjects of common interest to a narrow group of countries are now being designed. One such seminar, scheduled for this spring, is a program which deals with "charity commission" entities, and will involve NGO sector representatives and government officials from Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. ICNL will also sponsor international participation in an NGO conference in Bulgaria in May, and plans are underway to establish a network of lawyers who will work with NGO Centers throughout the CEE region.

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DemNet
Regional
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Briefs

NETWORKING



MAKING THE THIRD SECTOR HEARD

BANKWATCH DRAWS WORLD-WIDE ATTENTION TO NGO CONCERNS

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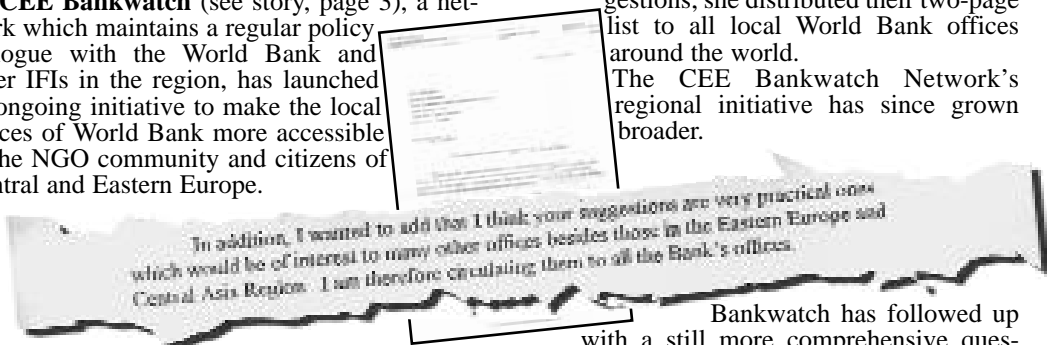
International Financial Institutions (IFIs) now exercise substantial influence over the path of development for the countries of CEE. Yet these institutions, which have taken over positions previously held by national bodies, are not subject to national regulation. They are governed jointly by a vast number of member states and are operated according to internal policies. While IFIs such as the **World Bank** should theoretically be accessible to input from non-profits, their local staff members have generally not had training to work with NGOs or grassroots groups.

CEE Bankwatch (see story, page 3), a network which maintains a regular policy dialogue with the World Bank and other IFIs in the region, has launched an ongoing initiative to make the local offices of World Bank more accessible to the NGO community and citizens of Central and Eastern Europe.

eties in borrowing countries. These concrete suggestions were then handed to a representative of the World Bank's headquarters, who promised to distribute them to all of the region's local offices. Although the network had the opportunity to distribute the list to these offices by itself, it chose to accept the Bank's offer in order to ensure that the local offices take the suggestions seriously.

The network followed up on the initiative a few months later, contacting a high-ranking official at the bank who was known to be open to discussion with NGOs. Impressed by their suggestions, she distributed their two-page list to all local World Bank offices around the world.

The CEE Bankwatch Network's regional initiative has since grown broader.



The campaign began with a questionnaire. Sent to NGOs which had been in contact with a local World Bank office, it included questions on the Bank's disclosure policy, on local staff members' willingness to seek public participation on projects, and on other issues of interest to NGOs. Non-profits from 9 countries replied to the questionnaire. Their responses confirmed the communication problem suspected by Bankwatch.

Upon presenting the results to the World Bank, three BankWatch representatives were invited to give a presentation. They did so at a Bank seminar in October 1996, presenting a list of suggestions about how World Bank offices can become more open and useful to civil soci-

Bankwatch has followed up with a still more comprehensive questionnaire about the World Bank's openness to the third sector, and has expanded its campaign to include other IFIs.

This report provided by Peep Mardiste, the BankWatch Network's National Coordinator for Estonia.

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