

Concept paper on the project
“Development of environmental NGOs electronic networking in Bulgaria” 2004

Background:

This concept paper closely follows the previously developed BlueLink Strategic Workplan and is based on the results from the Needs Assessment Survey conducted by BlueLink at the beginning of 2004 regarding the needs of development of an electronic platform on NGO elections and other ICT services. At the beginning of 2004 after a heated discussion on the NGOs mailing list, BlueLink was proposed by many environmental NGOs to become the facilitator of NGO elections and the provider of ICT services concerning the election process. In this regard a need for development of a tool for electronic servicing of the NGO election process appeared as well as further development of ICT services provided by BlueLink to the civil society in Bulgaria.

The concept comes as a continuation and follow-up of the project **REReP 2.3 - SEE NGO Electronic Networking** and aims at developing and deepening the BlueLink's ICT services to the civil sector in Bulgaria and on the Balkans.

Based on the identified needs and the proposed solutions BlueLink defined four Action Areas that are crucial for the further development of the electronic networking for NGOs in Bulgaria as described below.

Action Areas:

A: Content services and information maintenance and upgrade

Action Area A includes the following activities:

Development and adaptation of different APC ActionApps-based content services and complex software solutions for the civil society - this action area aims at strengthening the content and information flow, adding new functionality to BlueLink's web site on <http://www.bluelink.net>. A major goal is to achieve the following results: updated portal site, with database driven, constantly updated content, organised by categories, fully searchable, easy to navigate, interactive, allowing and inviting active NGO user's input. New software solutions will be sought for these. A major tool to be used in this Action Area will be the use of the Action Applications toolkit of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC).

News Service – daily news feed with news items related to environmental protection, sustainable development, and the third sector. News is currently posted in an online news database (searchable by category); an email news digest will be activated for users with limited possibility for online browsing. Direct NGO content input will be further encouraged and enhanced by a form-based online publishing tool, with easy -to-follow guidelines and an intuitive interface. The tool will allow NGO users to publish their own news, articles, stories, announcements etc. A comment section after each news item will enable active NGO online discussions on all issues, thus adding to the interactivity of the site.

Events Calendar – an events listing will allow NGOs, donors, governmental and other stakeholders to add their events to an online database (using Action Applications). The database will be easy both to fill in and to search. The calendar will provide greater visibility and publicity to regular NGO events, such as seminars, conferences, etc., as well as for more urgent events, such as calls for action, protest actions, campaigns, etc. This feature will considerably improve NGOs' interaction and awareness of one another's activities, thus building up NGO co-operation and joint actions.

Announcements – a space for various types of announcements containing calls for action, job positions, tenders for grants, calls for partnership etc. This section will allow NGOs, donors and other stakeholders to make their activities known. It will also raise the level of collaboration and common action within the NGOs community.

Links collection system – research, structuring and ranking of existing on line sources will be developed into a system to generate content onto BlueLink's web site including a feature for accepting NGO user suggestions for new links and categories. BlueLink is already performing continuous monitoring and selection of useful existing links from the World Wide Web (WWW).

Mailing Lists – topic oriented mailing lists are currently the most widely used service. They will continue to allow NGO users to participate in or initiate focused, specific discussions and receive information related to their priority areas of work.

Applications setting and development – The web portal structure and sections are in need of revision in order to ensure better information services to the NGOs and to meet the growing need to a more elaborate civil environmental database. The further development and management of BlueLink's web portal is closely related with the optimised development and utilisation of APC's Action Applications for facilitating and automating content generation, publishing and sharing.

Maintenance and development of thematic websites – BlueLink developed and currently maintains the NGO node of Bulgarian CHM on biodiversity (www.bluelink.net/chm) and a web portal on Climate Change issues (www.bluelink.net/climate). BlueLink will continue to build on them and will especially develop 'Energy efficiency' web page with focus on NGO best practices.

These activities will be implemented during the whole project period.

B: NGO Collaboration**Platform/tool for NGO elections (see Annex 1)**

This action area targets the functioning of BlueLink as a tool in the NGO consolidation processes (National NGO meetings, representation to different bodies, elaboration of common positions etc). Collaborative decision making of NGOs will be enhanced by on-line applications designed by BlueLink – a platform/tool for NGO elections will be developed, giving opportunity to all NGO representatives to exchange information with the public; electronic maintenance of the election process will be provided, based on the principles of transparency and democracy; a working group will be established with NGOs willing to participate in the election process. An active involvement and participation of the entire environmental NGOs community will be sought. Within this action area BlueLink will extend its coverage to remote parts of the country and will enable a larger number of NGOs to contribute and benefit from the network. BlueLink will continuously monitor and evaluate the feedback from the NGOs about the community's needs and demands as a basis for its further development.

As newly chosen facilitator of the environmental NGO's election process, BlueLink will develop a transparent platform/tool giving opportunity to the target group to participate in the election process (to nominate candidates; to vote; to receive information on: the election procedure, the running elections, the elections results, the list of NGO representatives in different government bodies). The platform/tool will also provide the opportunity to the NGO representatives to post information on-line, as well as to seek help and consultancy from their constituencies. Therefore this will improve the information flow from the general public to the NGO representatives and vice versa which is nowadays very poor, because of lack of suitable platform. In this regard the existence of such a platform/tool will assist in receiving the support from the society to the NGOs representatives and thus will improve the quality of civil participation in the decision making process.

BlueLink will start to work on the development of the NGO election e-tool in March/April 2004, after the meeting of Elections working group (and the BlueLink NGO Steering Group meeting) (see *Action Area C*). BlueLink will continue to maintain, develop, support and improve the election platform during the whole project period.

C: NGO Meetings (and decision making).

This action area includes organising meetings of NGO Elections working group and BlueLink's steering group in order to discuss and agree on the principles and the structure of the tool for NGO elections and BlueLink's services future development.

Elections working group meeting. As part of its efforts to serve the NGO community more comprehensively and efficiently, BlueLink will make efforts to involve different organisations in an Elections working group. This NGO group should follow the process of development of the NGO election platform in order to give comments and to specify/settle the principles and to agree on the structure of the e-tool. There are two distinct components for this task: one is to expand the number of NGO users, involved in the election process, and the second one is to expand the number of NGO contributors to the NGO election principles development. For this purpose BlueLink will use different promotion techniques.

The organisations that have expressed interest to contribute and participate in this Elections working group will be invited to a meeting in March 2004 and in September 2004. BlueLink will present its detailed technical concept on the NGO Election platform, and will get direct feedback and comments from NGOs. The meetings will be used also for establishing the principles of the election platform, levels of access, etc.

BlueLink NGO Steering Group meeting. In order to achieve a high standard of effectiveness, it is important for BlueLink to receive regular evaluations of its services from the direct beneficiaries – the environmental NGOs. Regular Steering Group meetings will fulfil this function and will allow the BlueLink team to fine-tune and adapt its activities in accordance with the needs of our users, as recognised and expressed by them. Regular face-to-face SG meetings are essential for effective joint decision-making and supervision of the project implementation. The Steering Group is the bridge between the NGOs and their network. The meetings allow BlueLink to closely follow the demands of the NGOs community and fine tune its work accordingly. A meeting of the Steering Group will be organised in April 2004.

D: International and regional cooperation.

BlueLink will continue to connect further Bulgarian environmental NGOs with communities in neighbouring countries from Central, Southern and Eastern Europe, as well as with the global civil society movement through APC. BlueLink will be promoting electronic networking among environmental NGOs in the SEE region by active participation in regional meetings on electronic networking; by providing on-going consultancy and counselling to NGO young e-networks; continuing support for NGO networks in countries where BlueLink has been previously involved.

BlueLink has been previously engaged and is currently planning to participate in various activities, which promote networking among environmental NGOs in the South Eastern Europe (SEE) region on both national and regional levels. Following previous work with Milieukontakt and the REC, BlueLink will actively support the development of electronic networking in SEE. Active involvement of APC will be sought.

BlueLink will continue to support the regional content sharing platform (www.see-environment.info) which serves as a web portal connecting environmental NGO electronic networks in SEE countries, providing open information for environmental NGOs in the region, and for all interested in the issues of environment and sustainable development.

In addition to these action areas BlueLink will maintain activities related to its public relations, institutional and human resource development.

Annex 1

Civil Environmental Gateway to Bulgaria

версия
на български

Environmental Content Sharing in South Eastern Europe

news
calendar
sekretariat
campaigns
NGOs directory
energy
useful links
access to information
environmental media
biodiversity
genetically modified
organisms
WSSD

Example

Position: example

Vote closes: 10.03.2004

Information etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc.
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Nomination:

Your name:

Your email:

Additional:
information

Submit

Bulgarian member of APC
in the Balkans

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