



Centre for Electronic Communication - EKONET

BUSINESS PLAN

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1. Executive Summary

Centre for the electronic communication EKONET which started as an informal group, during its existence and work while using ICT tools and exchange of information and data in the scope of protection and improvement of the environment, has developed excellent data base presented with WEB portal that offers information and services to the environmental NGOs and all other interested subjects.

Establishment of EKONET was as a result from the current need of the environmental NGOs and other subjects, including public institutions, experts and interested citizens.

Basic needs which occurred were and are strengthening the capacities first of all of the Environmental NGOs through various trainings, creation of partnerships, which will comprise a strategic coordinative approach to fulfil the needs and to solve the problems connected with the environmental issues.

With all information and services that are offered and will be offered in the future, will be provided to the Environmental NGOs to see the advances and opportunities of the electronic communication, to enhance the exchange of information and contacts and establishment of network cooperation in order to achieve easier identification of the market needs and more effective action.

With the above mentioned information and services that are provided by EKONET opportunity is given to all the subjects that are users of the network to be involved in the future development of this field while using the ICT tools.

With the straightening of the capacities, also will be provided to the NGOs to offer their knowledge and skills to find the solutions that will increase the public consciousness for protection and improvement the environment with coordinative and common approach as well as their active involvement in decision making process.

Thus EKONET will clearly be accredited in the field of effective usage of ICT in order to establish a promotion of the environmental NGOs as a true partner of the community and with that, receive status of Organisation of public interest.

2. Vision

Vision of EKONET is to grow in to National electronic network that will provide fast and simple usage of relevant information and services while using the ICT tools in the sphere of protection and improvement of the environment as a efficient way of cooperation and joint action.

2.1 Mission

Mission of the centre for electronic communication EKONET is an offer of full comprised information of the NGOs activities and all subjects that act on the field of protection of the environment, internet services, including design and hosting of Web sites, mailing list, trainings and to raise the capacities of the NGOs working in the area of electronic communications, consulting and development of special projects, media/internet development projects.

Mission of EKONET is achieved with realisation of following goals:

- To increase the influence of the environmental NGOs in their surrounding and in global level while using ICT;
- Development of the Web portal of EKONET that offers relevant and necessary information and services for protection and improvement of the environment;
- Increasing the level of knowledge and skills for usage of ICT by the environmental NGOs;
- To enable the information and services in the sphere of protection and improvement of the environment be more accessible and user-friendly for the environmental NGOs and the public;
- Initiate on-line communication and cooperation among the environmental NGOs on national and global level.

3. Context

3.1 History of EKONET

EKONET has began as an informal group for electronic communication with participation of members from four NGOs that work in the field of protection and improvement of environment, FOMEK – Skopje, Proaktiva – Skopje, Biosfera – Bitola and Planetum – Strumica, in January 2002, with the support from Milieukontakt Oost Europa, office in Macedonia.

In November 2003, EKONET became official organisation: Centre for Electronic Communication – EKONET, with that receiving a legal status.

General idea to form EKONET is to enable the environmental NGOs to present their activities to the broader audience, and with that to increase their influence in the decision making process, then exchange of information among the organisations, accessibility of the environmental information and data to all interested subjects

The most significant activities of EKONET from the time of forming until today are creation and effective functioning of the WEB portal with all the information and services that it offers, then creation and functioning of mailing list with significant and interactive flow of information, organisation of 16 trainings for 200 NGOs working in the field of protection and improvement of the environment in 15 cities in the Republic of Macedonia. At the trainings participants were introduced with the knowledge and skills to use ICT tools, as well as using the EKONET Portal.

We can also emphasise cooperation with the Governmental Institutions, Units of the Local Government, Public Institutions and Business sector which in their working scope, environmental issues are treated.

3.2 Current Situation

Creation and then implementation of this Business Plan is with enormous significance for EKONET seen from two aspects.

The first aspect is pointed toward the target groups, that are NGOs that work in the field of protection and improvement of the environment, public institutions, and interested citizens.

The second aspect is pointed toward the sustainability of EKONET.

This can be justified with several facts.

At the moment there are 910 users of the mailing list of EKONET, more than 45 000 persons had visited the EKONET web portal, 400 users are receiving the monthly bulletin, at the moment there are 310 registrated administrators at the portal, more than 900 news had been distributed through the mailing list, 200 NGO members are trained to use internet and www.eko.net.mk WEB portal, more than 120 interested NGOs receive all the information, and all that is accomplished by very short time.

Environmental NGOs, citizens, public institutions are interested for broader dispersion of information and services in order to achieve the goal to increase the public consciousness for protection of the environment. That is the reason to lead us to think for the possibilities to achieve broader scope of services and tools that are offered by EKONET.

With all this, the electronic network will not only be maintained, but will be under the process of expansion. Under prioritisation will be all subjects that are involved in to activities for protection and improvement of the environment.

This is very important for the environmental NGOs that will be seen as a Organisation of Public interest.

Only with good planning of this Business Plan and its implementation regarding our current situation our position will be seen, what should be changed, and how to emphasise our development based upon new opportunities.

Indeed, changes are the beginning of the development and success.

3.3 Strategic partnership

During its activities EKONET has established numerous contacts with NGOs and has developed excellent cooperation with them. With the support of REC we had opportunity to straighten the capacities of the environmental NGOs with which we already have partnership relations. At the moment we cooperate and have partnership with 5 environmental NGOs: Flora – Kriva Palanka, Areal – Struga, Izgrev – Sveti Nikole, Green Power – Veles and Vinozito – Stip.

Of special importance is the partnership with Legal environmental centre under the scope of Journalist Legal centre - ERINA which was established from the beginning of EKONET activities.

On the regional level cooperation is established with the electronic networks working in the region: VOLVOX - Serbia and Montenegro, QKE - Albania, Shari net - Kosovo, Zamirnet and Alert - Hrvatska, Eko Mreza of Bosnia and Hercegovina, Blue link-Bulgaria.

Of special importance is the continuation of cooperation with REC and Milieukontakt with which experience is provided sustainability of the Electronic network EKONET.

In the future EKONET will be focused on straightening the cooperation with the current partner organisations and networks, but also extending the cooperation with new organisations that want to join in to the electronic network, in order to achieve the needs and solving the problems in the sphere of protection and improvement of the environment.

4. Market

4.1 Clients

In the Republic of Macedonia can be found great number of NGOs working in the field of improvement of the environment with programs that comprise project activities connected with the protection of environment.

Current clients of EKONET are:

- 910 addresses of mailing list users;
- 400 clients who receive monthly bulletin
- 310 registrated WEB administrators
- 6 partner NGOs that work in the field of protection and improvement of the environment;
- 123 Local communitie units;
- Ministries in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia
- Number of individuals and interested citizens;
- Experts in the field of protection and improvement of the environment.

In the future it is planned to expand the number of subjects which will use the information and services of the EKONET, with special attention towards trainings for WEB development and design, internet access, on-line support in order to build the capacities of the environmental NGOs for effective usage of internet opportunities and tools as a realisation means for successful realisation of the project activities.

4.2 Demands of the Market

After the analysis made at the market regarding the current service users, it is concluded by EKONET that at the moment these needs are necessary:

- Additional information and services at the web portal

This issue is established in order to provide relevant and permanent information from protection and improvement of environment, as well as services which will contribute to more effective functioning of the Environmental NGOs and the subjects that work in this field. With that additional impulse will be gained for initiating activities from the environmental NGOs, institutions and citizens and with that achieve common approach for problem solving in the field of environment.

- **Trainings**

With the executed trainings for the representatives of the environmental NGOs will strengthen their capacities, which will result with expansion of their effectiveness and ability to implement envisaged goals.

- **Legal advises**

It is shown in practice that giving of the appropriate and true information as well as legal advises in the sphere of protection and improvement of environment, gives an opportunity to understand the environmental conditions clearly and comprehensively, and also to achieve the rights of all subjects working in this field stipulated by the environmental laws. For that purpose possibility on the web portal are offered on-line legal advises. The legal advises of EKONET are based on the established cooperation with the Legal centre-ERINA.

- **International cooperation**

In order to achieve cooperation and partnerships on international level creation and maintenance is needed on the English version of the portal in the segments of priority environmental themes, contacts with organisations which will provide partnership activities and exchange of experiences of the environmental NGOs in Macedonia, in the region and further.

4.3 Conclusion from market analysis

With the above mentioned we can make a conclusion that there is a big desire from all subjects to be involved in the sphere of action in the field of environment, but it is necessary to actualise the needs and

problems as well as to involve all the relevant subjects in to protection and improvement of environment and increasing the public consciousness.

In order to receive additional analysis of the market of information EKONET will execute every three months electronic surveys and questionnaires for the needs and problems of the subjects involved into environmental issues. Thus, Environment NGOs will be mediators for problem solving activities.

In this manner EKONET will follow the dynamics of distribution utility of offered services.

4.4 Competition

At the moment there is no other organisation with electronic network with so much information and services offered at the moment like the EKONET WEB portal has. Of course there is always a possibility that a new one will be formed but it is not possible in the near future.

If EKONET continues to achieve its strategic determinations, then the newly formed similar networks will need longer period to achieve the professional level that EKONET now has.

5. Products and Services

EKONET is an organisation that has dynamic growth and development. This statement has been proved in the previous period.

At the moment there are accessible information and services for all clients that don't have direct contact with the WEB portal or indirect throughout received monthly bulletins in electronic and printed form.

- **WEB Portal**

The WEB Portal provides expansion of the opportunities for contact with the users of the information and services. The Internet address is www.eko.net.mk The constant update, as well as the interactivity are the two most significant characteristics of the portal. The portal is available in Macedonian version and it is shaped with modern and up-to-date design and provides easy and fast utility of information and services.

The general information connected to EKONET portal for providing services are located at the front page as well as EKONET's basic roles and tasks, development, functioning and utility.

On the front page a form can be found, for new users to fill in, in order to receive personal identity and protection code and with that become active users of the portal. All the users are obliged to respect the rules for using the web portal.

Eleven content sub sectors are: Eco News, Eco Address Directory, Eco Calendar, Virtual library, Laws, Useful links, Info, Contacts, Tools and Services, Eco Interviews and Eco stories.

Eco News/ At this sub sector exist on-line database for the past and current Eco news divided in categories. It is also possible to publish other news from all the subjects that are members and users of the network.

Eco address directory/ In this segment exist information about organisations, institutions, donors and experts.

Eco calendar/ Comprises information of dates for notation of important days related to environmental events, press conferences, seminars, tribunes, debates and other similar activities.

Virtual library/ Comprises categorised documentation of environmental issues and useful information about NGOs and all interested subjects.

Laws/ The Sub sector Laws disposes with directory of Macedonian laws connected with the protection and improvement of environment and models of international experiences and documentations. Presented format of the laws are easily accessible.

Useful links/ On-line categorisation and exploration database of Internet sites, which provide access of needed information from the sphere of protection and improvement of environment, as well as information, for the interest of the NGOs.

Info/ Information about EKONET, its mission, activities and provided services.

Contacts/ With this sub sector, direct contacts with EKONET are provided.

Tools and Services/ Web portal, in the part of tools and services offers more utilising abilities: Forums on specific subjects, mailing list, short presentation on NGOs, on-line support campaigns, on-line legal advices, on-line promotions and exploration.

With all these above-mentioned aspects about the WEB portal, we are trying to profound and keep the knowledge and attention of our users with which we will accomplish our goal to cooperate and work with them.

- **Publishing and distribution of Bulletin**

Publishing and distribution of Bulletin is done to accomplish accessibility of information to the subjects that don't have Internet access. Readers of the Bulletin are the members of the NGOs working in the field of environment, all of the 123 local governments, institutions and business sector that are involved into protection and improvement of environment.

- **Trainings for the members of the NGOs that work in the field protection and improvement of environment**

The trainings made are related to the usage of Internet tools and opportunities to search important information related to projects implementation, representation of interests for the environmental issues as well as initiatives for future activities.

5.2. Future services

- Development of the web portal
- Increasing the number of mailing list users
- Support of initiatives and activities of the NGOs that work in the field of protection and improvement of environment.
- Training for the representatives of the NGOs
- Design and creation of WEB sites
- Electronic exploration
- Workshops
- Publishing and distribution of electronic bulletin
- Legal help
- On-line conferences

- **Development of the WEB portal**

With the overall interest shown by all the service users we have made a conclusion that there are numerous opportunities for extension and complement of the current offered services.

All users of the EKONET will use this in the most proper manner to gain all needed information in order to use them to achieve and develop its project activities and goals.

In the future it is planned to open new sub sites in the scope of the portal and will be focused on the project activities of the environmental NGOs.

With these activities the work efficiency will be improved, but also benefits will be increased for the secondary recipients. The capacities of all the subjects will be strengthen, especially the capacity of the NGOs that work in the Environmental field.

Only with strengthened NGOs that work in this field will be contributed to raise the public conciseness for protection and improvement of the environment

- **Increasing the number of mailing list users**

With enlargement of the number of the mailing list users better accessibility to information and services from the web portal will be provided to all interested subjects. The interested subjects comprise the public institutions that have executive power in fulfilment the needs and solving the problems related to the protection and improvement of environment. EKONET plans to achieve the number of 1200 users of the mailing list by the end of 2004.

Of course EKONET takes care of the structure of the future potential users in order to achieve the desired quality.

- **Support of initiatives and activities of the NGOs that work in the field of protection and improvement of environment.**

The information offered at the web portal is a good initiator for activities at the environmental NGOs on local and regional level, which make the cooperation and coordination of these subjects better.

The future activities of the environmental NGOs will come across with the support of EKONET because trough them is monitored the dispersion and promotion of the organisation along with all the services offered.

The support for the national interest initiatives in the field of protection and improvement of environment will be emphasised as well as raising the public consciences with special focus on the citizens.

- **Trainings for the NGO representatives**

Taking under consideration the current situation with the capacities of the Environmental NGOs, inevitable is the need for additional trainings not only for the users of the services of EKONET, but also to all interested subjects.

Primarily the trainings will be focused on the usage of opportunities of the ITC. The additional trainings will be in the sphere of: Process of management of project cycle, Strategic planning, Management with human resources, Management with NGOs, Evaluation, monitoring and reporting, financing the NGOs, Self financing, Volunteering and any other issue demanded from the NGOs.

- **Design and creation of web sites**

This service, which EKONET will provide in future, is assigned for all interested subjects in finding the needed, self-financing mechanisms of the organisation.

With that, sustainability will be provided of the web portal, which represents the backbone of EKONET. That is the way to provide a permanent continuity of dispersion of information and offering of services.

- **Electronic survey**

The future plan of EKONET is to provide electronic survey on actual themes and issues related to the protection and improvement of the environment

Target group of the investigation will be all the subjects on this field but also the public.

- **Workshops**

It is planned to organise workshops with the representatives of the Environmental NGOs, public institutions and interested citizens in order to achieve coordinative approach in the sphere of protection and improvement of the environment

All the subjects involved in this field, strategically will present their opinions, in order to avoid the duplication of the activities and achieve satisfactory results.

- **Publishing and distribution of the electronic bulletin**

Strategic commitment of EKONET is publishing and distribution of the electronic bulletin. With this activity more users will gain information important for their functioning and information about the overall condition of the environment in Macedonia and the region as a possibility to establish partnerships and common activities

The approach is made in this manner because it is much faster, more efficient and cheaper.

- **On-line Legal advice**

Incorporating this issue is very important segment not only for the Environmental NGOs, but also for the all citizens that will have a need from the environmental laws and their use in practice. In Macedonia we have environmental laws, but period is needed to evolve the conciseness for the environmental issues.

The on-line legal advice will continue to be executed with the cooperation with the Legal centre ERINA.

- **On-line conferences**

This service in the future will provide the opportunity to many users at the same time, at different geographical locations to discuss and make decisions. This is done in order to avoid the high costs of the events because of the travel cost, organisation, time and etc.

6. Marketing plan

6.1 Position

Position of EKONET related to the information and services offered at the web portal for its users is to understand the effectiveness and quality of the ICT tools. Knowing that:

- Internet offers fast and efficient communication among the environmental NGOs, institutions and interested citizens
- It is fast, efficient and cheap way to receive the needed information.
- Offer tools and services with which all the NGOs will be become more successful
- Offer many ways to achieve the best and cheapest presentation of the environmental NGOs to the public and donors.
- There is fast and cheap transfer and exchange of true and new information;
- Permanent accessibility (always and everywhere)
- Easy accessible data base

- Transparent exchange of data
- Exchange of experience and finding partners
- Bigger chances for solving the environmental problems

6.2 Key messages

The most important messages that EKONET uses are the authentic logo and the name of the electronic network

In that manner we are building the image of the organisation towards the users. Recognising the logo and the name, the users connect themselves with our mission and services provided by us.

6.3 Marketing strategy

Strategic goals of EKONET

1. Increasing the information and services on the web portal and their accessibility enlargement
2. Establishing new contacts with the interested subjects and creation a partnership with them
3. Building and strengthening the capacities of EKONET

The goals are realised with the promotion of the existing services, which are comprised of these components.

1. Connection of the mailing list with the list of other networks of the NGOs
2. Publication and distribution of the bulletin in printed form
3. Design and distribution of fliers to existing, potential, and interested subjects
4. Exchange of banners;
5. Publication of information in electronic and printed media
6. Presentation of EKONET services on fairs, conferences and seminars
7. Meetings with the NGOs.

7. Management and organisation

7.1 Personnel

Working activities of the personal in EKONET, as well as the working time is dependable on the character and the dynamics of the working assignments and project activities.

The team of EKONET is comprised of:

1. Project coordinator
2. Content Manager
3. Content Editor
4. ASP Programmer
5. WEB Master
6. WEB designer

Volunteers are involved in the implementation of the activities. This has a great significance for EKONET because with training and involvement of the volunteers in to the work of the organisation the efficiency of the work will be increased. The work will be more eased and the accessibility of the information and services will become increased.

7.2 Legal status

In November 2003, EKONET has been registered in the centre for electronic communication - EKONET, by the existing law for organization of citizens and foundations.

The structure of EKONET is presented with: Assembly as a highest organ, Executive board, supervision board and President as a legal representative of the organisation

7.2 Location of the organisation and equipment

The address of the organisation is P.O. Box 360 1000 Skopje.
The organisation has a disposal with the equipment:

- 7 computers;
- 1 telephone / fax;
- 1 printer

At the moment the residence of the organisation is not with permanent character with address: Street 11 October No. 17 Skopje 1000, Macedonia

8. SWOT analysis

S- Strong sides

- EKONET is the only Electronic eco network in Macedonia
- It has the fastest transfer of eco information with the trough the mailing list
- There are 910 members of the mailing list
- There are 310 registered WEB administrators
- It has permanent transfer of information and offer of services to environmental and other NGOs, institutions and interested citizens
- Information receive 120 NGOs which are network users, Ministry of Environment and Physical planning, 123 Local communities, Delegates of the parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, Ministry of foreign affairs, Business Sector working in this field, Foundations, Macedonian Government
- Information is distributed to other two networks: DOSTA E with 190 NGO members and SEGA with 70 Youth NGO members
- EKONET has excellent cooperation with other electronic networks in the region where there is no language barrier.
- Gives on-line legal advices in the sphere of environmental laws with cooperation with the Legal centre-ERINA
- There is always a transparency of the information founded on the WEB portal
- It has excellent designed and interactive WEB portal which contains updated information and services related to the environmental issues
- Publish monthly bulletin in 400 copies, which is intended for the users that don't have internet access

W-Weaknesses

- Small number of partner organisations, regarding the territorial coverage
- Weak communication on international level
- Passive use of information and services from the network members

O-Opportunities

- Training materials for the NGOs
- Utility of the Internet tools in everyday life and activities
- Management trainings, Management with human resources, facilitator techniques and skills, web design and websites hosting, financial sustainability, self financing, evaluation, monitoring and reporting, trainings for volunteerism
- On-line campaigns of the NGOs
- Enhancing the exchange of experiences and information in order to have better coordination
- Support of initiatives of the NGOs, institutions, interested citizens focused towards the Environment protection and improvement of environment and belong to the National interest

T-Treats

- Reduced accessibility of information and services as a result of high prices of Telephone and Internet
- Not using the on-line services given by EKONET
- Decreasing the number of information and service users

9. Financial overviews

At the moment of functioning, foreign foundations provide the financial support of EKONET.

In near future, with giving on the disposal, the new services of the web portal and future trainings and activities the provided financial resources will be used as a financial self support of the current activities.

The financial resources will be also provided from the memberships of the electronic network and also donations from the business sector that works in this field.